DAILY NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

THE TIMES

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INSIDE TIMES2

Why I went public about freezing my eggs

Sophia Money-Coutts

Burnham 'will keep going' until Channel crossings are stopped

David Chazan, Ali Mitib
Steven Swinford Political Editor

Andy Burnham has vowed to "eradicate" Channel crossings as French police warned about their ability to stop so-called mega-dinghies.

After an inflatable vessel carrying a record 230 migrants arrived in Dover on Monday, the prime minister vowed to "change our tactics" to tackle smuggling gangs and "keep going" until the crossings stopped.

"I know people will have been worried to see that image yesterday," he said. "It shows that the gangs are changing their tactics but so will we. We will now change our tactics and we will be relentless in chasing them down."

Burnham said that while the payment-by-results deal reached with France had resulted in heightened law enforcement on French shores and a reduction in crossings, there was more work to be done.

"People will say to me, 'We don't want any crossings'. I understand that concern. There are further things that we are doing and we will keep going at this issue until we deliver that eradication that people are looking for," he told GB News.

The prime minister declined to give a timeline for stopping crossings, saying he would rather "promise to people what I know I can do and what I know I can deliver".

The increasing use of mega-dinghies carrying hundreds of people has caused concern among the French authorities, who fear they will be harder to police and make it more difficult to rescue migrants at risk of drowning.

A French policing source told The Times: "If there are bigger but fewer boats putting out, we'll have more trouble detecting them on the shore.

"We can't police every centimetre of some 200 kilometres of coastline, so we

Continued on page 2

YUI MOK/PA

Cracking up The dried bed of Hollow Pond, near Leytonstone in east London, where the water levels have fallen dramatically this summer Car wash ban looms, page 9

Extra safeguards needed for early release, say police

Chief constables write to PM over 'collective concern' as thousands of offenders set to leave prison

David Woode, Steven Swinford
Jessica Sharkey, Oliver Wright

Police chiefs have told Andy Burnham that he must ensure the public are protected from thousands of violent and serious offenders who are set to be granted early release from prison.

All 43 chief constables in England and Wales said they were concerned that an approach which did not "sufficiently distinguish" the gravest offending "risks undermining public safety, victim confidence and wider confidence in the criminal justice system".

The prime minister promised yesterday to prevent the killers of PC Andrew Harper being freed early. However, other criminals convicted of manslaughter are still due to be released early, along with domestic abusers and stalkers, under a government scheme to address prison overcrowding.

In the letter published last night, the police chiefs urged Burnham to establish an "additional public protection safeguard" in cases involving violent and dangerous offenders.

They said: "Where an offender has caused a death, committed exceptionally serious violence, or presents an ongoing risk to individuals or communities, there should be explicit consideration of public protection, victim impact and community safety before release arrangements are amended. This principle should also apply to serious offences where there is a continuing risk of harm to victims or the public, including serious violence against women and girls, stalking and harassment."

The letter added that the public "should be able to trust that when a court passes sentence for the most serious crimes, victims, public protection and confidence in the justice system remain at the heart of any subsequent decisions about release". The group said the intervention was made in the memory of Harper, a Thames Valley police officer who was killed in 2019, aged 28, after responding to a quad bike theft in Berkshire. The police chiefs said it was also made in support of Harper's "family, friends, colleagues and the communities he served".

Burnham also addressed concerns about migration yesterday, saying that it was wrong for the burden of housing asylum seekers to fall only on the poorest areas and insisting that "all parts of the country" had to take their share.

The prime minister said last week

Continued on page 6

One in ten GP partners earn at least £250k a year

Oliver Wright Policy Editor
Eleanor Hayward Health Editor

Hundreds of family doctors are earning at least £300,000 a year from the NHS, their take-home pay having increased by more than 20 per cent in real terms over the past decade.

Figures from HM Revenue & Customs show that one in ten GPs who run their own practice are paid at least a quarter of a million pounds a year, while one in 20 earn more than £300,000. That figure is higher than the pay earned by the vast majority of NHS chief executives running hospitals and a third more than the highest NHS salary for a hospital consultant.

Despite their earnings rising in real terms since 2013, GP partners are holding "work to rule" collective action as part of a formal dispute with the government over what they describe as underfunding.

Since May the British Medical Association (BMA) has encouraged GPs to take steps to reduce their workload, including refusing requests from hospitals to take on the care of patients with prostate cancer and heart conditions. The BMA is threatening to keep escalating collective action unless the government commits itself to providing an extra £3.5 billion for GP services.

The pay statistics were published in a report by the Health Foundation think tank that also highlighted how general practice has in effect become a two-tier service in which salaried GPs earn on average half the amount made by their partner-level colleagues.

Nearly half of GPs are partners, meaning they own their own practices, which they run as private businesses. They are contracted to provide services to the NHS and employ other GPs on a salary.

The average income of a GP partner in 2023-24 was £163,751, compared with £74,498 for salaried GPs, the report found. More than 80 per cent of salaried GPs earned less than £100,000, compared with 21 per cent of those who

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News

Today's highlights

7am Immigration minister **Anna Turley**
10.30am **Ruben Andersson**, professor of social anthropology at the University of Oxford and author of *Age of Security*
10.45am Palaeontologist **Steve Brusatte**
1.30pm **Evan Roth Smith**, pollster and political consultant
3.35pm Singer **Pixie Lott**, right, discusses playing Marilyn Monroe in *Who Killed Marilyn?*

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TODAY'S EDITION

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The impossible dilemma of early release

The Story

Andy Burnham faces the first big test of his premiership. With jails reaching a crisis point, the government has announced an emergency early prisoner release scheme, but there has been outcry from victims. What options are left?

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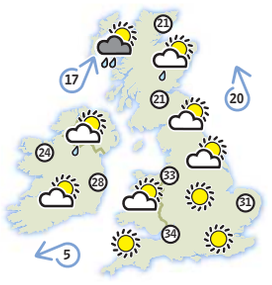

Hot and sunny in central and southern Britain. Showers in the north and west. **Full forecast, page 51**

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Labour overtakes Reform in poll as wavering voters return

Oliver Wright Policy Editor

Labour has overtaken Reform UK in the polls for the first time in 18 months as some of the party's 2024 voters return to the fold.

A YouGov survey for The Times found that Labour were backed by 24 per cent of voters, two points ahead of Nigel Farage's party on 22 per cent. It is Reform's lowest score since March last year.

However, the rise in support for Labour has come primarily at the expense of the Greens, who were down one point on 12 per cent, and the Liberal Democrats who were also down one point on 11 per cent compared with August 2-3.

The Conservatives, meanwhile, were up two points on 21 per cent, putting them a point behind Reform.

Labour's poll increase is driven by a marked rise in its 2024 voters who said they would vote for the party again if a general election were held tomorrow.

In June, when Sir Keir Starmer stood down, 49 per cent of the voters who gave him his landslide victory said they were still supporting the party. This rose to 60 per cent in the latest poll. At the same time the number of Labour voters who said they would back the Greens has fallen from 19 per cent in June to 8 per cent this week.

Reform has lost ground to the Conservatives in recent weeks. At the start of June, 34 per cent of 2024 Tory voters said they would back Farage's party — a figure that has now dropped to 22 per cent.

Burnham appears to have been particularly successful at attracting younger voters back to Labour. About a quarter of 18 to 24-year-olds said they would vote Labour, compared with 14 per cent when Starmer stood down.

Green support in that age group has fallen from 46 per cent to 41 per cent in the latest poll.

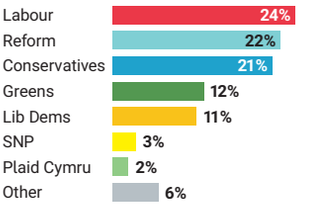
YouGov's findings have been echoed in recent days by other pollsters, some of whom have found even bigger Labour leads. A "poll of polls" suggests Labour's support has increased from 19 to 25 per cent since Starmer left office. Reform has dropped to 24 per cent, down from 29 per cent in January.

Anthony Wells, head of politics and elections for YouGov, said Burnham had partially reunited the left. "What you see in the numbers is not only that Labour has increased its vote share but both the Greens and the Liberal Democrats have seen a substantial drop in their support, which had been boosted by Labour defectors," he said.

"At the same time there are signs that, for the moment at least, Reform has peaked and is now losing some of the support it picked up from disaffected Tory voters who are now returning to Kemi Badenoch.

"However, more broadly the polls shows that the public are still deeply divided, with just three points separating the top three parties — which is within the margin or error."

Voting intention



2,417 adults polled between August 9-10. Source: YouGov

PM must seize his Goldilocks moment

James Johnson
Comment

The bookies' favourite for the year of the next election is still 2029. An election this year is priced as by far the least probable outcome, with odds of about 16-1.

The prime minister has ruled out calling an "early election". But I believe a combination of factors mean Andy Burnham should go for a general election this year or, at the latest, early next.

As the latest YouGov voting intention survey for The Times shows today, Burnham is already getting a polling bounce, putting Labour ahead of Reform UK for the first time since early 2025. Right-leaning voters are even more split than when the same dynamic allowed Sir Keir Starmer to win a landslide while only claiming 34 per cent of the vote.

Remaining Conservative voters disapprove of Reform and vice versa. Nigel Farage and Kemi Badenoch are at loggerheads, meaning it is hard to see this resolving itself in the course of a campaign. Reform is also losing votes to Rupert Lowe's Restore Britain. Such a picture means Labour could quite easily win a sizeable majority on 30 per cent of the vote.

It is the left uniting behind Burnham that would get him there. He has far higher approval ratings than Starmer did among Green and Liberal Democrat voters. And there is one man wavering voters on the left fear more than any Tory: Farage. A recent YouGov poll found that while Burnham has a 12-point advantage over Badenoch for who would make the best prime minister, Burnham is seen as a better choice than Farage by a 26-point margin.

There is another reason why Burnham may think he faces a golden opportunity: he may believe the window is closing for such a match-up with Farage. I suspect Farage will weather this storm but with his recent travails over donations to Reform and the prospect of two by-elections, you can see why No 10 may feel the chances of Farage being in post for the whole parliament are dimming.

Burnham would do well to use his Goldilocks moment. Farage is not too strong nor too weak — he is strong enough for Burnham to engineer a two-horse race but he can be beaten.

What would happen in such an election? My best bet is that Reform would be a big beneficiary, moving up to more than a hundred seats. The Conservatives would fall to below one hundred. That would set Reform up to be the sole party of the right but it would be far from government. Given the circumstances, it would also be a stonking result for Labour and could lead to a majority of more than 90 seats. Burnham should be content with 40.

If he throws the dice nationally, there are good odds he will win a large majority of his own, escape the manifesto trap he faces and scatter his opponents.

Given the split on the right, he faces a unique set of circumstances. He would have not only his best shot at power but could relegate the Conservatives to a state of near-extinction. For a man built on Labour traditions, is there any stronger temptation than that?

James Johnson is the founder of the political consultancy JL Partners

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Channel crossing promise

rely on drones and helicopters and detective work to determine where the launches are going to happen, but we're not always successful, especially if there are simultaneous launches from different places along the coast."

The use of the mega-dinghies is believed to be a reaction to the greater number of checks on the French coastline. According to the French maritime prefecture of the Channel, 15 boats carrying more than 100 people and one carrying more than 200 have attempted to cross this year.

The overall number of arrivals has fallen sharply this year. The provisional total so far is 15,472 — 42 per cent lower than the number recorded by this time last year and down 12 per cent on the same period in 2024. Last month, 2,316 people crossed the Channel from France to England in small boats — the lowest July total since 2020.

However, more than 3,000 migrants have crossed the Channel in the first 22 days of Burnham's premiership. This includes more than 900 since August 8. More crossings are expected as clear skies and moderate winds are forecast.

The government said joint operations with France had prevented more than 47,000 crossings and led to the seizure of 1,100 boats and engines since the last election. The maritime prefecture for the Channel told The Times: "The smugglers are trying to adapt to the systems put in place by the security forces, but they are driven by the lure of profit above all. By putting more people on each boat, they are trying to maximise the amount they make from each departure."

Gérard Barron, the president of the Boulogne-sur-Mer branch of France's National Sea Rescue Society, told La Voix du Nord newspaper: "We fear the worst because no one is equipped to get 200 people out of the water at the same time. It would take at least half an hour and there would be deaths."

A UK government source said: "Sustained pressure from law enforcement means the gangs are finding it harder to launch boats, and are therefore being forced to place more people onto them."

A Home Office spokeswoman said: "This latest incident demonstrates the reckless and dangerous tactics employed by the criminal gangs. We are making progress ... but we must go further, which is why we have signed a payment-by-results deal with the French to put 40 per cent more boots on the ground on French beaches."

PM must refuse to take no for an answer on migrants, leading article, page 25

Australian PM refuses to apologise for fruity 'joke'

Anthony Albanese denies he made an inappropriate comment about Japan's leader, writes **Roger Maynard**

Perhaps if it had not come hot on the heels of a Kylie Minogue sexism storm, the melons of Japan's first female prime minister might not have caused Anthony Albanese so much trouble. But the Australian prime minister has form when it comes to apparently crass references to women on podcasts.

Last month he apologised for having named Minogue when asked on the same podcast about whom he would like to "shag".

This week he has found himself on the back foot again, this time over claims that he referred to Sanae Takaichi's anatomy when presented with a diplomatic gift of melons as she arrived in Canberra on an official visit.

The furore centres on Albanese's appearance on the *Bush Deep* podcast, which follows Bushie, a "wildly inappropriate journalist as she tears her way across Australia in search of a good yarn". Still, a veteran politician such as Albanese, particularly after the Minogue affair, might have known that a podcast that promises loose banter could put him in a tight spot.

During his appearance, Albanese, 63, was asked about Japanese gifts of crown melons. He described them as "pretty strange" presents that ended up being "quite good". He said "she brought two", while gesturing with his hands in front of his chest.

Anthony Albanese was accused of making a crass gesture talking about melons gifted to him by Sanae Takaichi. He was already in hot water for remarks about Kylie Minogue

On her visit in May, Takaichi said she had given Albanese two royal melons, prized as diplomatic gifts, grown in Shizuoka prefecture and costing up to £150 each. This was, she said, in celebration of approval of their export licence.

Opposition leaders demanded that Albanese apologise — despite Tokyo officials laughing the matter off — but the prime minister was unrepentant yesterday. Challenged by an opposition MP during question time in parliament, he rejected suggestions that his comments had been inappropriate. "I reject the assertion in the question," he said. "Australia and Japan have never been closer ... and my government has taken our special strategic partnership to new heights."

Angus Taylor, the opposition leader, said the remarks were "beneath the office of the prime minister". The deputy Liberal leader, Jane Hume, described them as "grubby". She said: "If you offend a woman you should apologise."

But there was support from some of Albanese's female colleagues. Catherine King, the transport minister, said the podcast should be treated as "satirical", while the social services minister, Tanya Plibersek, described Takaichi's visit to Australia as "very successful". She added: "We have an excellent relationship with Japan."

However, a former Japanese ambassador to Australia, Shingo Yamagami, accused Albanese of casually mocking Takaichi. Writing in The Australian newspaper, Yamagami highlighted Takaichi's position as Japan's first female prime minister, noting she had suffered derogatory comments about her gender, including from Chinese officials. "The last thing she expected was to be so casually mocked by the trusted leader of Japan's special strategic partner," Yamagami wrote.

However, the Japanese government sought to prevent damage. In a diplomatic cable dated July 13, it "noted" the "sensationalised reporting in the Australian media" of the Albanese podcast.

The note said the belief in Tokyo was that there was no "ill intention" in Albanese's appearance.

Ronaldo's latest match is his wedding

Marieta Marinova

Cristiano Ronaldo has married his long-term partner Georgina Rodríguez in a private ceremony, exactly a year after the couple were engaged.

The footballer, 41, married the 32-year-old model in Cascais, Portugal. The civil ceremony for the couple, who share two children, Alana, eight, and Bella, four, was described as "private and intimate". It was also attended by the footballer's other children — twins Eva Maria and Mateo, nine, and 16-year-old Cristiano Jr.

The couple announced the news yesterday, posting on Instagram a photo of their hands intertwined wearing their wedding rings. The centrepiece ring features an oval-cut diamond estimated at 25-30 carats and has been valued by experts at about $5 million.

The couple's romance dates back to 2016, when they first met while Rodríguez was working as a sales assistant at a Gucci store in Madrid. Since then, they have navigated both intense international fame and devastating personal heartbreak, most notably in April 2022, when Bella's twin brother, Ángel, died during delivery.

The image confirming the couple were married was posted online

In recent years, the family have embraced lifestyle changes, including relocating to Saudi Arabia after Ronaldo's high-profile transfer to the Saudi Pro League. Their family dynamics have been showcased in the Netflix series *I Am Georgina*, which offers fans a behind-the-scenes look at Rodríguez's journey from retail assistant to global influencer.

Ronaldo has previously said that he thought Rodríguez was a "very interesting girl, so much more mature for her age", but he had not expected the romance to last.

He told viewers in confessional footage that he "didn't think at the beginning that [the relationship] would be this strong, that I would fall in love with her. I didn't expect it, honestly. But after a while, I felt that she was the woman of my life."

The couple had been expected to marry on Ronaldo's home island of Madeira over the weekend, where crowds had gathered in anticipation. They are expected to return to Saudi Arabia, where Ronaldo is the captain of the champions Al-Nassr, with a record £165 million-a-year deal.

Mafia plot? Forget about it, as friend accused of stunt

Tom Kington Rome

When a bomb in a quiet street near Rome last year destroyed two cars belonging to Italy's top investigative reporter, shockwaves reverberated through Italian politics.

Sigfrido Ranucci, host of the TV show *Report*, had lived with a police escort for years after a series of scoops about Italian mobsters. The bombing suggested the mafia had decided to silence him.

A magistrates' investigation, based on wiretaps and text messages, now suggests the bombing was a stunt to boost Ranucci's profile. A 198-page report, seen by The Times, claims that a friend of Ranucci, rather than the mob, was behind the attack and had no intention of killing him, instead aiming to turn Ranucci into a hero and convincing him to enter politics. "You will be prime minister in two years," said the friend, Valter Lavitola, who was arrested amid suspicions he planned to flee.

The TV journalist Sigfrido Ranucci, who exposes mafia criminality

Investigators suggested Ranucci, 64, was unaware of the plot but many people have questioned why he became friends with Lavitola, a convicted extortionist once close to Silvio Berlusconi.

Ranucci's lawyer, Roberto De Vita, justified the friendship, saying: "We are constantly being betrayed by friends and business partners. But who could have imagined Lavitola would have stooped to something like this?"

TIMES PHOTOGRAPHER RICHARD POHLE

Flying back in time Josh Welch, heritage engineer at the Brooklands Museum in Weybridge, Surrey, inspects the cockpit of a Hawker Fury fighter plane from the 1930s

Cambridge tried to shut down whistleblower, tribunal finds

Nicola Woolcock Education Editor

Cambridge University shut down a whistleblower to protect its reputation after he raised concerns about bullying and misogyny, an employment tribunal has found.

Deborah Prentice, the vice-chancellor, was accused of a failure of leadership after it lost a case brought by an astrophysics professor who claimed he was victimised for highlighting the poor treatment of female colleagues. The loss heaps pressure on Prentice: Cambridge already faces questions about academic integrity after the Jason Arday plagiarism scandal.

The whistleblowing complaint was brought by Neil Wyn Evans. He accused senior managers of "groupthink" and the tribunal concluded that they had rubber-stamped statements ghost-written by human resources staff in an attempt to silence him and protect the university's reputation.

Prentice, who has been Cambridge's vice-chancellor for three years, was directly criticised in the tribunal findings.

Wyn Evans had 11 of his 14 complaints upheld. He said he had been victimised after flagging unfair treatment of female staff members at the university's Institute of Astronomy. Richard McMahon, who was its director from 2017 to 2022, raised a grievance against Wyn Evans and two other professors. Wyn Evans intervened to try to protect his colleague and emailed a senior academic saying there was overwhelming evidence that McMahon had a "personal vendetta" against the woman.

Neil Wyn Evans suggested the vice-chancellor's position was now "untenable"

He wrote: "There is bad history of misogyny to female administrators at the top of the IoA. I am terrified of history repeating itself here."

The tribunal found staggering delays in investigation of the matter and said Wyn Evans had suffered detrimental treatment, despite making "protected disclosures", ie whistleblowing, under the Employment Rights Act.

During the hearing, at Bury St Edmunds this summer, lawyers for the respondents accused Wyn Evans of "shedding crocodile tears" and said he "weaponised" the death of a former colleague who took her own life to "use for his own purposes".

The tribunal panel said that while the lawyer was "acting on her client's instructions", "these were very strong accusations to have levied against the claimant and we have not been persuaded that they were true".

The institute and the university failed to show how they reached their decisions, the tribunal said. It described a "pattern of ghost-writing and HR making other people's decisions for them".

The tribunal said Prentice's role lacked oversight or scrutiny. "It did not appear to us many steps were taken to understand the ... matter," it added.

Responding to the judgment, Wyn Evans said Prentice should consider her role, suggesting it, together with her handling of plagiarism claims against Arday, made her position "untenable".

Cambridge said it was "carefully reviewing" the judgment. There will now be a hearing to decide compensation.

Arday shows we believe what we want to believe, Daniel Finkelstein, page 21

Academic called western education a threat to Muslims

Ali Mitib

A former Hizb ut-Tahrir member who called "western education" a "threat" to Muslims and condemned democracy and integration was appointed to the same faculty as Jason Arday.

Farah Ahmed was made an assistant research professor at Cambridge's faculty of education last year after working as a research associate and fellow there for almost six years.

Ahmed, who focuses on Islamic education and was head teacher at an Islamic primary school, wrote a chapter in a pamphlet by the proscribed group, published in 2002 and republished in 2017. In the pamphlet, seen by The Spectator, she wrote that "the Muslim community as a whole in Britain needs to recognise that western education is a threat to our beliefs and values".

She also attacked schools for teaching that "polygamy or marriage under the age of 16" was "archaic and discriminatory to women". She called democracy a "corrupt tradition" in which if "decision makers decide to make bombing Iraq or homosexuality legal ... there is nothing anyone can do".

In 2010, Ahmed told the Charity Commission that although she had been a member of Hizb ut-Tahrir, she had not been involved for a few years and did not agree with all of its "views as a political organisation".

The commission was investigating the Islamic Shakhsiyah Foundation, which runs primary schools in Slough, where Ahmed was a head teacher, and Haringey. It found that the charity no longer had links with the group.

Hizb ut-Tahrir was proscribed in 2024 after its response to Hamas's October 7 attack on Israel was found to have crossed the line into promoting and encouraging terrorism.

Ahmed was asked for comment.

Cambridge University's faculty of education said: "The faculty is committed to academic freedom and freedom of speech within the law. All members of our community are encouraged to exercise their rights to freedom of speech, including to challenge ideas or theories they disagree with."

Quintagram® No 2644

Solve all five concise clues using each letter underneath once only

1 Swampy Deep South tributary (5)

_ _ _ _ _

2 Cry of delight (6)

_ _ _ _ _ _

3 Low-frequency loudspeaker (6)

_ _ _ _ _ _

4 Conspicuous error (6)

_ _ _ _ _ _

5 US server of liquor (9)

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A	A	B	B	E	E	E	E
E	E	E	F	H	I	K	L
O	O	O	O	P	P	P	R
R	R	R	U	W	W	Y	Y

Solutions see T2 MindGames p15
Cryptic clues T2 MindGames p14

ADHD doc 'risking lives'

The charity ADHD UK has said Channel 4 is putting lives at risk by labelling the disorder a "myth" in a documentary warning that a generation of children is being medicated. *The Great ADHD Myth?*, which airs on Tuesday, was made after a 200 per cent increase in referrals over five years. Channel 4 said it had a remit to offer "alternative views".

PC dragged by car

A mother of four who injured a police officer by dragging him down the street with her Range Rover as he tried to arrest her for drink driving was spared jail at Liverpool crown court yesterday. Candace De Silva, 37, of Anfield, got a suspended sentence of 28 months in prison after she left PC Simon Ward with life-changing injuries on September 14, 2024.

Belly size beats BMI

The size of a person's waist gives a better picture of heart disease risk than body mass index alone, research shows. A US study of 260,000 people, published in the Journal of the American College of Cardiology, found that those with a normal or overweight BMI and a high waist-to-hip ration had a 15 to 50 per cent higher risk of most cardiovascular problems.

In a spin over windmill

A row has broken out after the owner of Wales's only working windmill was ordered to repaint it after a makeover. Richard Holt, 33, painted the 250-year-old grade II listed Melin Llynon on Anglesey in the colours of the Welsh flag for a festival. The council wants it returned to white but he said the response from the public "was too much to ignore".

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Coroner links death of law student, 19, to obesity jab

Poppy Koronka Health Correspondent

A law student died in her university halls of residence in London after taking a weight-loss drug, an inquest has heard.

Josephine Nasr was prescribed tirzepatide, under the brand name Zepbound despite not being obese, the East London coroner's court heard last week.

Doctors told Graeme Irvine, the coroner, that the drug, which is also sold in the UK under the name Mounjaro, may have triggered a fatal heart rhythm.

An audit by The Times last week found that weight-loss drugs had been implicated in more than 100 deaths in the UK since they were approved for use.

The 19-year-old student, from Corona, California, was found on September 23 last year when staff broke in to her room to check on her. She was found with an empty vial of the weight-loss drug next to her.

The inquest was told that Nasr, a second-year law student at the University of East London, had spoken to her family members at about 8.30pm that evening but was found dead a little over two hours later.

Nasr had told them that she had been feeling nauseated and was vomiting, known side-effects of the drug, and they had urged her to go outside for some fresh air. Her sister, Anastasia, became worried that Nasr would become dehydrated from vomiting and arranged for a private healthcare provider to administer IV fluids.

She tried to call her sister and, when she did not respond, called the university security team.

Security staff let themselves into Nasr's room and found her collapsed on her bathroom floor. An ambulance was called but the student was pronounced dead at the scene. Police searched the room and found an empty vial of tirzepatide. Nasr, who is from California, was prescribed the medication by her doctor in the United States. Her BMI was overweight, but not obese, and she had begun taking the medication in the summer of 2025.

A post-mortem examination by a pathologist, Alan Bates, found that Nasr had a congenital heart condition called myocardial bridging, which could have contributed to her going into a fatal arrhythmia.

Bates added that vomiting caused by tirzepatide could cause hypoglycemia. This could in turn cause an electrolyte imbalance leading to arrhythmia. He added that Nasr's underlying heart condition could have made it worse. "She was an otherwise healthy young woman," he added.

Her mother, Lorin Mansour, was about to fly to Egypt for a holiday with the rest of the family when she heard the news, and fainted.

The family flew to London instead of Egypt to identify Nasr's body. George Nasr, her father, said: "She was full of joy and always helped others before herself. She loved travelling and the ocean."

Her mother said that while her daughter was quiet, she was committed to her family.

She added: "We are part of the Coptic church and the way Josephine was willing to help people showed that she lived her faith."

In his narrative conclusion, Irvine said that the death was due to a cardiac arrhythmia, which was caused by myocardial bridging and an imbalance of electrolytes caused by hypoglycemia, triggered by the prescribed tirzepatide.

Analysis by The Times found that weight-loss medication patients filed about 150,000 reports of adverse side-effects from the drugs, and more than 100 deaths have been linked to the medication.

The figures, published by the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), show that thousands of reports have been made about all of the GLP-1 weight-loss drugs available through the NHS. They include liraglutide, also known as Saxenda; semaglutide, offered as Wegovy; and tirzepatide, also known as Mounjaro.

The data is collected through the MHRA's Yellow Card scheme, which allows patients and medical professionals to report side-effects they suspect were caused by a certain drug.

There were more than 100,000 reports of adverse effects from tirzepatide, including about 10,000 classed as "serious", the figures show. The MHRA has potentially linked 98 deaths to the medication.

More than one report of side-effects can be made per patient under the Yellow Card scheme, meaning the figure does not reflect the total number of individuals complaining of side-effects.

Fatal outcomes reported on the scheme are not necessarily caused by the medicine and could be caused by underlying or undiagnosed illnesses, unrelated to the treatments. The scheme allows relatives of patients or medical professionals to report their belief or concern that the medication may have contributed.

Josephine Nasr from California was studying at the University of East London. She was found dead with a vial of the weight-loss drug tirzepatide beside her

Doctors given 'crash course' as maternity unit shuts

Eleanor Hayward Health Editor

A hospital in rural Devon has shut its maternity unit temporarily because of "unsafe levels of medical staffing", forcing pregnant women to travel two hours to give birth.

Birthing services at North Devon District Hospital in Barnstaple were closed on Tuesday because of staffing shortages. Women have been diverted to a hospital 55 miles away in Exeter.

More than 300 women who are 34 weeks pregnant or more have been contacted to discuss "individual circumstances, care plans and the travel and transport support available".

Doctors working in the hospital's A&E unit have been given a "crash course" in dealing with birth emergencies, such as haemorrhage, for women who do not have time to travel to a different hospital.

Pregnant women said that they are afraid they will not make it to the hospital in time, or are considering relocating to a different part of the country until they give birth.

Harriet Knight, who is 34 weeks pregnant, told The Guardian: "The next closest maternity unit is a full two hours away and we have a family history of labour taking under two hours from start to finish.

"So we have the option of potentially giving birth in a layby on the North Devon link road as we try to get there or opting for free-birthing at home with no access to maternity care."

A doctor at the hospital said: "It's been an intense time. We're capable but they've thrown us into a potentially very serious situation. There's a physical risk to the public."

The Royal College of Midwives said that the suspension of births at North Devon District Hospital should "ring alarm bells". While the trust has described the suspension as temporary, it cannot put a date on when maternity services at the hospital may return.

Sam Higginson, chief executive at Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, which runs the hospital, said: "This decision was not taken lightly. It has been made following a thorough review of our medical staffing, but this has shown a significant shortage of obstetric medical staff over the next few weeks.

"We've therefore taken the difficult decision to suspend the service. This is a temporary suspension."

GPs out-earning chief executives and hospital consultants

Continued from page 1

were partners in their practices. In the last decade the average salaries of GP partners has increased by more than 18 per cent, while the wages of GP employees has gone up by less than 4 per cent.

There are also big gender disparities in pay for all types of GPs, even after adjusting for working hours. For example, male partners in their fifties earn £184,594 on average, while women in their fifties earn £148,996.

The latest NHS workforce data, for June, showed there were 17,831 GP partners in England. About a thousand earn more than £300,000, while nearly 4,000 earn more than £200,000.

The government has pledged to hire thousands more GPs and shift more care from hospitals to them as part of a "neighbourhood health service".

The Health Foundation's report looked at the state of general practice and found that the sector's share of the NHS budget declined from 8.8 per cent to 8.3 per cent between 2015 and last year, despite repeated policy commitments to increase it. It found that government funds GPs to the tune of about £219 per patient each year — substantially below the average cost of a single ambulance or emergency care episode.

Dr Luisa Pettigrew, senior policy fellow at the Health Foundation, said pay disparities were one of a number of problems, alongside rising demand, growing workload and a funding model that had not kept pace with the role governments expected it to play.

"Despite repeated commitments to shift care into the community, general practice's share of the NHS budget fell in the decade to 2024-25," she said. "If the government is serious about improving neighbourhood health services and shifting more care out of hospitals, a clear, multi-year commitment to increasing general practice funding as a share of overall NHS spending is required."

Dr Clare Bannon, chair of the BMA GPs committee, said: "The report shows only around one in ten of all GPs are on incomes over £200,000. The vast majority earn significantly less. Real-terms earnings have dropped over the last 20 years, according to this report, which confirms any additional funding is going into services, not GP pay."

NHS England said: "The number of GP appointments delivered in June was up almost 50 per cent on the same period in 2019. More than three quarters of people rate their experience of their GP practice as good."

Behind the story

In 1948 more than eight in ten GPs in the British Medical Association voted against the founding of the NHS (Eleanor Hayward writes).

They were furious at the prospect of losing their financial independence and ability to run their own surgeries.

As a result, Nye Bevan, the Labour health minister, allowed doctors to continue to buy their own practices, operating as small business owners.

This partnership model remains today. It means the majority of GPs, unlike other doctors, are not employed directly by the NHS. Instead, GP partners — also known as contractors — are self-employed and own a share of their practices, which hold contracts with the NHS. They employ other staff including GPs. For the past two decades, however, the proportion of GPs who are partners has been falling — about half are partners, compared with two thirds in 2015. This is because there are fewer, larger practices and a high proportion of young doctors who are reluctant to take on the financial risk of buying into a partnership.

Burnham orders justice minister

Alex Norris must spend his summer holiday 'finding a solution' to the prisons crisis, writes **Steven Swinford**

Alex Norris, the justice secretary, was jetting off for his summer holiday on Monday evening when the news came through. The prime minister had tasked him with finding a "solution" to stopping the early release of Jessie Cole and Albert Bowers, two of PC Andrew Harper's three killers.

Norris is now spending much of his break working as he and Ministry of Justice officials try to devise a plan that will not inadvertently undermine the government's efforts to relieve pressure on Britain's overcrowded prisons.

It represents the first big test of Andy Burnham's nascent premiership after he staked his authority on blocking the early release of Cole and Bowers.

The prime minister said he was determined the two men, who were jailed for 13 years in 2020 for manslaughter, should serve their full sentences. He said he fully appreciated the "anguish" of Harper's family and was increasingly confident he could stop the release.

Burnham's intervention, first reported by The Times, represents a significant shift in Downing Street's position and has raised tensions in Whitehall.

There is said to be anger within the Ministry of Justice, where some officials feel they have been unfairly blamed for simply doing their jobs in spelling out the pros and cons of each policy option to the prime minister.

One government source claimed that Burnham appeared to be "trying to be nice to everyone" and failing to understand the trade-offs involved.

"The Ministry of Justice is totally demoralised," they said. "They never said anything was impossible — they simply spelt out the risks involved."

This characterisation was rejected by another government source, who said that officials at the Ministry of Justice were "getting their heads down and getting on with the job".

But the frustration in Downing Street with the options presented to Burnham is real, with accusations that officials were not creative enough in coming up with solutions.

Burnham said he had "never taken no for an answer" and was "confident that there's more that can be done" in response to public concerns. Precisely what that is has yet to be decided.

Just over a week ago, shortly before he went on his summer holidays, Burnham made one of the most consequential decisions of his premiership so far.

The new prime minister was bent on limiting the impact of Sir Keir Starmer's plans to release thousands of serious offenders early to relieve pressure on Britain's overcrowded prison system.

Officials presented three choices: barring the release of those sentenced to more than ten years; those sentenced to more than seven years; and a third option based on the type of offence.

Each option had drawbacks. The first two, officials said, would keep Harper's killers behind bars but many serious offenders, including rapists, would be released early.

Burnham decided to go for the third option, enabling him to announce that those who had committed rape, child sex or grooming offences would stay locked up. Officials were explicit that this would mean that Harper's killers were released.

It was, Burnham suggested, as far as he could go. "I can look people in the eye and say to them there is nothing more I could have asked without risking the prison system reaching capacity and collapsing within months," he said.

The backlash was swift, with the move condemned by both Harper's family and police chiefs, who branded the decision perverse. Hundreds of thousands signed a petition demanding the killers should stay in prison.

Burnham was also unhappy. On Friday, No 10 alighted on an alternative option: exempting killers of emergency workers from the early release scheme.

Officials were deeply sceptical. On Sunday, The Times disclosed that they warned Burnham such an exemption would not be legally possible. It would have to extend to all those convicted of manslaughter and eligible for early release, thought to be about 450 people.

The next morning, the prime minister's official spokesman said it was "not possible" to exclude only Cole and Bowers from the scheme. "To exempt someone who's been convicted of manslaughter for killing an emergency worker, you'd need to exclude the whole manslaughter offence," they said.

That afternoon, however, Burnham decided to use the full weight of No 10 to commit to keeping the two men in prison. Downing Street contacted Debbie Adlam, Harper's mother, to tell her of the prime minister's new stance just before The Times broke the story.

There is no going back from Burnham's commitment, but it remains unclear what the government will do.

The prime minister is taking a twin-track approach, first by trying to pursue some kind of legal carve-out and second by freeing up more prison spaces to relieve pressure before the first tranche of the 5,000 prisoners is freed over a ten-month period from October.

Burnham has said he wants to take three measures to ease capacity, but all of them pose challenges. The first is to release some of the 2,271 prisoners on indeterminate sentences, which Burnham views as a "long-running injustice". Those on such sentences face the prospect of being detained indefinitely.

Officials are combing through each individual case to establish who is eligible to be freed, but it is far from straightforward. A government source said many people on indeterminate sentences were in psychiatric units and posed a genuine risk to the public. Deciding who qualifies for release is a subject of intense discussion.

The second measure is to convert women's prisons to spaces suitable for male inmates, releasing some female prisoners in the process. But there is a risk that this would lead to female convicts being jailed far from their families and a government source said it would be likely to free up relatively few places. Converting prisons will also take time, which the government does not have.

The third measure is speeding up the release of the 10,134 foreign-citizen offenders in Britain's jails, of whom just above 6,000 are eligible for removal. There is a catch, however, in that their countries of origin must agree to take them back and that many do not have comparable sentences.

Victims have also raised fears that perpetrators could be released early.

The government does have some time on its side, with Cole and Bowers not expected to be released until May next year. The hope is that, by then, Burnham's approach will have paid off — either enough space will have been freed to prevent the release of the tranche that includes Cole and Bowers or an exception will have been secured.

Burnham's many recent predecessors have all said they noted the same problem when they got to No 10 — they pushed the levers of power only to find nothing happened. Burnham is about to discover whether that is still the case.

Letters, page 24

Andy Burnham and Angela Rayner, the communities secretary, met members of the public and police in Ilkeston, Derbyshire, on their mission to give people a say over the future of their high streets. The prime minister is also working on preventing the early release of the killers of PC Andrew Harper, left, with his widow, Lissie

'Uncertainty leaves victims' families in state of chaos'

Continued from page 1

that he had "pushed to the very limits of what is possible" by preventing most rapists and child sex groomers from being eligible for early release. The government plans to release thousands of criminals early over a period of ten months from October to free up places.

He said yesterday that he was pushing a package of measures including faster deportation of foreign criminals, releasing lower-risk prisoners serving indefinite sentences and using parts of the female prison estate for male offenders, which would allow the exemption of the most serious criminals from the early release scheme.

However, Burnham was accused by the victims' commissioner of creating "chaos and uncertainty" in the justice system by "flip-flopping" on the plan. Claire Waxman told The Times she was disappointed and appalled by the prime minister's failure to take a clear decision on which prisoners would be released from jail early. Waxman said that the failure to take a clear decision had left Harper's family and all other families affected by manslaughter in a constant state of uncertainty and chaos that was "prolonging their torture".

Debbie Adlam, Harper's mother, told BBC *Breakfast* she was not looking for a "special case" for her son but wanted the killers of all emergency workers to be exempt from early release.

A Ministry of Justice spokesperson said: "We are pulling every lever to protect the public and cut crime – undergoing the largest prison expansion programme since the Victorian era, launching the biggest ever expansion of tagging to toughen community punishment and increasing support to victims, giving them a say in the strict licence conditions of offenders."

Ministers' options for cutting prisoner numbers

Female prisoners
At least 3,500 prisoners are female, representing about 4 per cent of the total in England and Wales. A greater proportion of women than men are imprisoned for non-violent, acquisitive crimes.

There is talk of creating space in women's prisons for male inmates but this will be difficult. "Putting a few female prisoners back into the community is relatively easy. But doing enough to free up an entire prison is a much bigger task," a source said. "Given the sort of numbers they're talking about, you'll probably have to free up two female prisons."

Foreign citizens
Speeding up deportations for convicted criminals could bring the biggest public criticism for Andy Burnham. "The issue is not simply about if you can get them back to their own country, it's also a question of whether you want them to continue serving their sentences," the source said.

This was brought into focus this summer when it emerged that Roksana Lecka, 23, a nursery worker convicted of abusing 21 babies, had been deported to Poland after serving just 14 months of an eight-year prison sentence. The families of her victims said it would be "horrendous" if Lecka did not face further punishment in her homeland.

"Are we also happy with the idea that one way in which we get convicted foreign criminals to return home is giving them, say £1,000, to go without further protest?" the source asked, adding: "The government has improved the rate at which foreign national prisoners have been deported … A lot of the low-hanging fruit has already gone but can they deport more in sufficient numbers to create the space they need?"

Imprisonment for public protection
Imprisonment for public protection (IPP) sentences were abolished in 2012 but the change was not retrospective. The sentences were intended for people considered dangerous, but whose offence did not merit a life sentence. More than 2,000 IPP prisoners remain behind bars.

"The most credible proposal on the table is to re-sentence them," the source said. "If the judges at the time didn't have the option of an IPP sentence, what would these guys get? They could make sensible decisions on that basis."

The government has resisted this option because of the crown court backlog, which stands at 80,000 cases. The source added: "There isn't the judicial capacity to do it, and if there was, who knows how long it would take to get through them all."

to quell rage over early release

TOBY SHEPHEARD/PA

Wealthy areas must share the asylum burden, PM insists

Geraldine Scott Assistant Political Editor

Wealthier areas of Britain must "play their part" in housing migrants, the prime minister has said after villagers threatened to hold a referendum on leaving the UK over plans for new asylum accommodation.

Andy Burnham said it was wrong for the burden of housing asylum seekers to fall only on the UK's poorest areas and insisted that "all parts of the country" had to take their share.

Residents of Piddington in Oxfordshire have voted to stage a referendum on leaving the UK in protest against the potential use of a former military site in Bicester.

Tim McNally, the parish council chairman, had told LBC: "To have 1,250 people brought into an environment where there's 350 people — that's like adding 32 million people into London, as an example, overnight."

Asked about the site, Burnham told GB News: "It's obviously going to be challenging, but I am prepared always to listen to people ... I do have to say, we cannot have a situation where it's only the poorest communities ... that receive all of the dispersal of refugees and asylum seekers. I do believe all parts of the country need to ... play their part."

Chris Philp, the shadow home secretary, said that Burnham did not understand public opposition, writing on X: "Andy Burnham just doesn't get it. We shouldn't be housing illegal immigrants anywhere — wealthy or not. Illegal immigrants should all be deported within a week of arrival."

The government is looking at using more former military sites to accommodate asylum seekers as it tries to end the use of hotels. Barnham Camp in Suffolk is also under consideration.

Protesters gathered outside the former RAF base at the weekend and unrest broke out in nearby Thetford, Norfolk, where people tried to storm homes linked to asylum seekers.

Houses in multiple occupation (HMOs), in which three or more unrelated tenants from separate households share basic facilities such as a kitchen or bathroom, have also become a focus of attention.

After winning the Makerfield by-election in June, Burnham promised to end "HMO Britain" and said that he would change the asylum accommodation system.

London has the highest concentration of HMOs in the UK, although contractors responsible for setting up dispersal housing usually choose lower-income areas where rent is cheaper. The HMO label can also be applied to houses in the private rented sector. They have become a popular choice for asylum contractors because they are cheaper to rent than hotels, although some councils have imposed stricter planning requirements on HMO rentals in recent years.

Burnham must bring zeal to tackling illegal migration, leading article, page 25

Rayner's vape 'purgatory'

Geraldine Scott

Angela Rayner has admitted she cannot give up vaping because her nicotine addiction has plunged her into a "lifetime of purgatory".

The communities secretary, who is cracking down on e-cigarette shops, said that her children were "disgusted" by the habit. Rayner, who has said in the past that her children call her "the vape dragon", told the radio station LBC she had failed to quit vaping completely. She said she used e-cigarettes to stop herself returning to smoking after becoming addicted to nicotine as a teenager.

Villagers protest against plan to use military site for migrants

Ali Mitib

In the Oxfordshire village of Piddington locals have been thrust into the spotlight over plans to house asylum seekers at a disused military site nearby.

The village, which is home to fewer than 400 people, voted symbolically to consider seceding from the UK in protest against a plan to accommodate 1,250 single adult male asylum seekers in an old Ministry of Defence storage depot without consulting residents.

When The Times visited Piddington last month, it found locals of varying political opinions, ages and backgrounds united in opposition to the plan.

Joe Marshall, a 26-year-old building surveyor, came across the village last year, and knew that he had found the spot that he and his fiancée had dreamt of settling down in. Thatched cottages with meticulously kept hedges are a common sight, as are open front doors, children running around unattended and mothers pushing prams at all hours of the day. Like many residents, Marshall fears that the village has been placed in peril by the plan, which is yet to receive planning permission.

"The government just announced they're going to do this to us, but we've had no contact about what they are going to do to maintain safety," he said.

Victoria Hubbocks, 39, a mother of three, said that she was worried about her children's safety: "I don't think it's about where they're from and how they got here. It's about 1,250 unknown men. Even if they were from Scotland, we'd have a problem."

Many locals expressed sympathy for asylum seekers but voiced concerns that the site was too rural and lacked the amenities to support them. Piddington has no shops, cafés or pubs. Social life centres on the church and the village hall.

Len Woodhouse, 80, who has lived in the village since 1969, said: "They are human beings. They need looking after if they're legitimate but to put them here in a totally rural area is wrong."

The government is planning to house 1,250 asylum seekers at a disused Ministry of Defence site in the idyllic village of Piddington, Oxfordshire, without consulting the 400 people who live there

On July 4, 96 per cent of Piddington's population voted in favour of holding a referendum on whether to secede from the UK in protest at a lack of consultation on the plan. The secession would be purely symbolic as there is no legal mechanism by which a village could declare independence without the consent of parliament and the government.

The vote, masterminded by the parish council chair Tim McNally, drew attention to the village and garnered support from Elon Musk, who posted on X: "What has happened to towns who did nothing to deserve it, like little Piddington village, will happen to all of Britain unless there is a fundamental policy change."

Aware of the potential to become a lightning rod for the far right and of the divisive nature of the immigration debate, the villagers have vowed to keep their efforts apolitical.

Marshall, a parish councillor, said: "We're not taking any sides at all. We're actually trying to discourage certain types of people from coming here. We could get Tommy Robinson to rock up here very quickly, but we don't want that at all. We've seen in other places that protest, the far right may turn up and locals can lose control."

Calum Miller, the Liberal Democrat MP for Bicester and Woodstock, said that he was shocked by the scale of the housing and the "complete lack of warning from government" when he first heard about the plan 12 hours before it was announced.

The government said: "The concerns of communities are central to our immigration reforms, which is why we are working with local authorities and others to make the system fairer by housing asylum seekers in basic accommodation, including ex-military sites."

News

JOE PEPLER/PINPEP

Slice of history **Artists from the studio 3D Joe & Max have spent more than three weeks creating the illusion of a sheer drop into the dinosaur age outside Canary Wharf station in east London, also incorporating a dissected phone box and black cab, in a stunt to promote the new science fiction film The End of Oak Street**

Police force trainee on rape charge

A student police officer has appeared in court accused of rape and kidnap.

Mohammad Hassan, 23, serving with Greater Manchester police (GMP), stood in the dock at Stockport magistrates' court yesterday flanked by two security guards. He spoke only to confirm his name and date of birth in the five-minute hearing.

Ewan Cooper, for the prosecution, said that the alleged incident involved a woman in her 20s on Saturday evening.

Cooper said: "He got out of the car, placed his hand on her neck and bundled her into the car.

"He then drove with her in the car, drove to an area of Manchester where he sexually assaulted and raped her and drove off at speeds of 120mph."

Hassan, from Hale Lane, Failsworth, Greater Manchester, and who was off duty at the time, was arrested after a police pursuit on the M62 which ended in West Yorkshire, GMP said.

A 999 call had been received shortly before 10.20pm in which a woman could be heard in distress in a vehicle in the Manchester area.

Officers traced the suspect's personal vehicle which led to the arrest of the officer on suspicion of rape, kidnap and dangerous driving.

Hassan, who has been suspended by the force, has been charged with oral rape, kidnap, strangulation, sexual assault, theft of a mobile phone and dangerous driving.

No pleas were entered and Hassan was remanded into custody for a hearing at Manchester crown court on September 15.

Defence chiefs under pressure to 'reboot' hotline to Moscow

Larisa Brown Defence Editor

The last time General Valery Gerasimov, Russia's chief of the general staff, picked up the phone to his British counterpart was four years ago, after one of his pilots tried to shoot down an RAF spy plane over the Black Sea.

After what was described by one source as a "very frank" conversation with Admiral Tony Radakin, the chief of the defence staff at the time in September 2022, there has been no communication between British and Russian military chiefs since. Subsequent requests by Radakin were turned down by the Russians with a "polite note" stating the general was "too busy" to take the call, it is understood.

After Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Knighton took over from Radakin in September last year, he too attempted to reach out to Gerasimov, the architect of the long and costly war. Gerasimov didn't pick up.

Now, after recent events in the Channel, the Norwegian Sea and elsewhere, Wes Streeting, the new defence secretary, and his top military man are under pressure to attempt to "reboot" lines of communication amid fears of an "unintended escalation".

The Times has been told senior officials and diplomats are nervous about the lack of communication between the two sides and the risk that a misunderstanding in the high seas could be the trigger for a wider conflict with Russia.

John Foreman, a former defence attaché in Moscow and Kyiv, said: "Without a direct line there is a risk of unintended escalation. A major misunderstanding could ultimately lead to people dying.

"You need to talk face to face to get any traction with the Russians ... talking clearly and directly with your adversary in private isn't weakness."

Foreman said there was an urgent need for talks to be rebooted if the UK was to operate in the High North in future, which could become a potential battleground amid rising tension between western allies and Russia.

"If the chief of the defence staff thinks 'this is probably the most dangerous time in the last 30 years that I've been in uniform', then maybe it's time for some fresh thinking," he added.

In June, a Russian warship fired warning shots at a British yacht in the Channel. Alan Kelvey, 71, and his wife Jane, 69, came across the frigate Admiral Grigorovich. Russian sailors blasted their horn before launching a "salvo" from the deck with small firearms to deter the yacht, which manoeuvred away and continued on to their destination in northern France.

Last month, a Russian warplane flew dangerously close to the Royal Navy's flagship in the Norwegian Sea and dropped a large number of sea trackers into the water around it. The Bear-F, a large long-range maritime patrol plane, repeatedly performed "unsafe and unprofessional" approaches towards the aircraft carrier HMS Prince of Wales

In January 2022, Radakin told The Times that he had spoken to Gerasimov two days before Christmas, when tensions were high, with fears of a full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

General Valery Gerasimov, Russia's chief of the general staff, with President Putin in Moscow last December

He also spoke of a "hotline" inside the Ministry of Defence to Russia's situation centre. It was tested by a retired military officer every day to make sure that if urgent talks were needed to de-escalate an incident the option would be there. Although the line still exists, it is thought to be used less frequently than before the Ukraine war.

The last known call between a British defence secretary and his Russian counterpart was in October 2022 when Ben Wallace received a call from Sergei Shoigu who wanted to voice his concerns that Kyiv was preparing to deploy a dirty bomb — a claim rejected by Britain, France and the US as false.

Such calls were typically arranged via Moscow's defence attaché but in May 2024, the UK expelled the Russian defence attaché from London for alleged espionage. In a tit-for-tat, Captain Adrian Coghill, the UK's defence attaché in Moscow, was expelled.

A government source said: "The question of comms channels is somewhat moot whilst the Russians don't want to answer the phone."

A spokeswoman for the government said: "Our embassy in Moscow enables us to deliver clear and robust messages directly to the Russian government, helping to protect UK interests and manage risks of escalation.

"As a responsible military power, we have a longstanding position of wanting to have senior military dialogue with Russia, we regret that Russia is unwilling to take part in this."

Blair's son sets sights on Nato cash

Charlie Parker

Sir Tony Blair's son has founded a defence technology start-up as European nations increase their military spending to deter Russia.

Nicky Blair, a former teacher and football agent, is said to be speaking to investors about raising $200 million (£148 million) for Pyra Group, which promises to "serve the security interests of the UK and its allies".

Companies House filings show that Blair, 40, quietly incorporated the London-based firm in November. It is building technology that will "allow users to integrate different systems into a single source", a source told the Financial Times.

Pyra's sparse website says only that it is launching this summer, and tells visitors to "stand by".

Nato allies are increasing their defence spending to address the growing threat from Russia. The British government has pledged to increase core defence expenditure to 3.5 per cent of gross domestic product by 2035.

Investors are betting that chancellor John Healey will boost military spending faster than his predecessors did. Before taking charge of the Treasury, under Andy Burnham, Healey had quit as defence secretary in Sir Keir Starmer's government in a row over the failure to properly fund the military.

Blair is the second child of the former Labour prime minister and Cherie Blair.

Who will keep Iceland safe?
Roger Boyes, page 22

Firefighters to tackle New Forest blaze for 'several more days'

Lara Wildenberg

Firefighters will remain at the New Forest fire "for several more days" as they face water supply issues and changing wind directions.

An area equivalent to 224 football pitches (nearly 400 acres) has been affected near the eastbound A31, which remains closed.

There has been no requirement for locals to evacuate, although many are concerned about the forest's wildlife which includes rare species of reptiles, birds and native New Forest ponies.

Forestry England said that the Commoners — local people who look after the 5,000 free-roaming ponies — were being kept informed of the incident and added that animals could "roam freely across the forest to unaffected areas".

The public has been warned to avoid the area. Hampshire & Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service said there was "significant impact" to the roads. Bournemouth airport advised holidaymakers to factor in extra travel time.

National Highways said that significant repairs would be required to the road surface, safety barrier and boundary fencing once it was safe to do so.

The fire service initially sent 26 fire engines and four water carriers to the eastbound A31 on Sunday after receiving 160 emergency calls reporting that a van had caught fire. The service said that the blaze spread from the vehicle to the central reservation before progressing into nearby heathland. Fire engines, water carriers and off-road vehicles have worked "tirelessly" overnight, pumping water through miles of pipes laid from a nearby lake.

Yesterday, the fire service said that it was "managing to contain the fire" with the help of a police drone to prioritise hotspots.

Ian Thew, 78, said the fire came within half a mile of his home on Sunday as he and his wife Tracy packed their bags.

"We are probably one of the closest properties to the fire," he said, adding that a firefighter suggested they prepare to evacuate. "We sat twiddling our thumbs and watching mundane television until three in the morning when we received a phone call saying that we were fairly safe so we went to bed."

Thew thanked the emergency services and forest rangers for updates.

Gillie Molland, the lead ranger for the New Forest National Park Authority, said that the affected area included protected heathland, home to "many nationally and internationally rare species — including all six of the UK's reptiles — insects, plants and birds such as Dartford warblers and nightjar".

Addressing concerns about the wild ponies, Forestry England said: "All of these animals are owned and looked after by Commoners who are being kept informed regarding the incident. The animals can roam freely across the forest to unaffected areas."

DIMITRIS LEGAKIS/ATHENA PICTURES;

Scorched earth A wildfire at Llangynidr reservoir near Ebbw Vale as firefighters tackle the New Forest blaze, top right, and a packhorse bridge is revealed in Baitings reservoir, Yorkshire, bottom right

Thousands face ban on car washes and swimming pools

Adam Vaughan Environment Editor

More than 100,000 people will face water shortages if a rare ban on filling public swimming pools and other non-essential uses is not granted, a water company has said.

Southern Water said that, in a worst-case scenario, with a continued lack of rain and without reductions in demand, supplies to 165,000 people in Southampton, Eastleigh and the surrounding areas could be compromised.

Ministers are reviewing a drought order requested by the company that could impose a non-essential use ban (NEUB) across parts of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. It is extremely rare for such bans to be granted. The last time was in 2006 and before that in 1996.

If the ban is approved, businesses will be barred from washing vehicles, cleaning windows and watering gardens. Filling and maintaining non-domestic swimming pools will also be banned.

Angela Eagle, who was appointed environment secretary when Andy Burnham became prime minister, has 28 days to approve or reject the request.

Hosepipe bans are already in place for more than 27 million people. However, the requested ban would be a sharp escalation to cope with the record-breaking dry summer.

In its application, Southern said it needed the ban because of a combination of regulatory requirements and exceptional environmental pressure.

The company relies on the River Test, a globally rare chalk stream, to ensure supply to Southampton and the Isle of Wight. It has no big reservoirs or capacity to import water to the area. Since 2018, it has been required by the Environment Agency to maintain flows of the Test at higher levels, to protect the unique environment.

If limits on how much water can be drawn from the Test are reached, a service reservoir may provide water for a "day or two", the company said, but parts of its network would then struggle to maintain supply. "The approximate 165,000 population of the Southampton West supply area could soon be significantly affected by a restricted water supply," it said.

Walter Shute, four, keeps cool by the River Hamble in Southampton

Parts of the Test are at half of their usual flows or less and demand from customers has been high thanks to five heatwaves this summer. Southern usually supplies 550 to 560 million litres a day but this has jumped to more than 660 million.

Southern applied for a NEUB in July last year during drought, but rainfall then meant the ban was not needed.

"Our application is a precautionary measure only," it said. "The regulatory process takes time and we need to ensure options are available if exceptionally dry conditions continue. Applying does not mean the measures will be used. It's a precautionary step that allows the necessary scrutiny and approvals to take place while there is still time to plan effectively."

The Met Office said yesterday that this summer was on track to beat last year as the warmest summer yet. Even if temperatures are average for the rest of the month, the record will be broken.

A spokesperson for the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs said: "This government is ready to take action to help secure water supplies if required. We are working closely with the Environment Agency, water companies, farmers, and environmental organisations to protect water supplies and minimise environmental damage. We all have a role to save water in these unprecedented times, and any drought order must weighed up carefully against impacts to nature and people."

Researchers push back on North Sea oil

Adam Vaughan Environment Editor

More than 50 British scientists have urged ministers to reject drilling at two North Sea oil and gas fields, warning that it would worsen global warming.

The researchers have written to Miatta Fahnbulleh, the energy secretary, before she makes decisions on the Jackdaw gas field, 150 miles east of Aberdeen, and Rosebank oil field, 80 miles northwest of Shetland.

A consultation on Jackdaw closed on Monday and one on Rosebank closes on August 17. The projects could contribute £28.7 billion to the economy and create up to 3,500 construction jobs.

The scientists, including those from Cambridge, Oxford and Leeds universities, said new drilling was incompatible with the government's climate commitments. Their intervention comes amid what they called "a summer of devastating wildfires" and drought.

Labour's manifesto promised to block licences for new fields, but Andy Burnham, the prime minister, is inclined to "move quickly" on Jackdaw and Rosebank, according to industry sources.

News

Civil servants still work from home three days a week

Oliver Wright Policy Editor

Some civil servants are spending fewer than two days a week in the office, despite rules requiring them to be at their desks at least 60 per cent of the time, a new analysis has found.

Senior mandarins have repeatedly claimed officials are meeting the target, publishing figures showing Whitehall departments have a staff occupancy rate of between 60 and 100 per cent.

But the figures are a sleight of hand, because most government departments do not have enough desk space for all staff. In fact the true occupancy rate is far lower, with civil servants in some departments spending an average of as little as one and a half days a week in the office.

The only government department to have hit the 60 per cent target was the

The government has set a target of an occupancy rate of 60 to 100 per cent

Department of Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT), which has now been abolished by Andy Burnham.

The analysis, carried out by the Centre for Government Reform think tank, used freedom of information requests and parliamentary questions to establish the number of workspaces in each Whitehall department's main London office, as well as the total number of civil servants for whom that office is their primary workplace.

It was then able to calculate the true attendance figure — rather than simply the number of desks that were occupied on a given day.

The Department for Business and Trade, for example, claims it has an occupancy rate of 80 per cent, but its London offices in Caxton House and the Old Admiralty building only have space for 1,058 of its allocated 3,699 staff. This suggests a true occupancy rate of just over 20 per cent — meaning that the majority of staff are primarily working from home.

It was a similar story in the Department for Education. It has 1,023 desks in its Sanctuary Buildings headquarters but employs 2,176 staff overall. This means its claims that 59 per cent of its staff come into the department to work actually represents just 604 civil servants, or 27 per cent.

Even the Treasury, responsible for giving the taxpayer value for money, only has a rate of 44 per cent.

Senior government officials point out that the figures do not account for officials who are carrying out visits, taking part in external meetings, or spending part of their time working from other Whitehall offices associated with their department.

However Ameer Kotecha, chief executive of the think tank, said ministers needed to "come clean and start being straight with the public about the true numbers, rather than hiding behind figures that don't stand up".

He added: "Civil servants are being paid to work in offices they aren't turning up to. Ministers talk tough on productivity, but our data shows that the average civil servant goes into the office fewer than two days a week.

"That is a scandal. It is pointless the government issuing hollow targets ... It must start holding departments properly to account."

Dave Penman, head of the FDA Union, which represents senior civil servants, said that with more and more staff being moved out of London to work in regional offices, the question of where people were physically based had become less important.

"The vast majority of meetings will now be a hybrid of people working in office in London, offices in other parts of the country, or working from home," he said.

The Cabinet Office said the conclusions drawn from the data were "misleading and incorrect ... Staff regularly work across the government estate, not just from their assigned HQ location.

"We are clear that a minimum 60 per cent office attendance remains the best option for our staff and the public."

WILLEVANS/SNAPPHOTOGRAPHY/BNPS

Out of this world **The countless stars of the Milky Way light up a crystal-clear night sky over the colourful beach huts at Mudeford in Dorset** Weather, page 51

Davies will fight speeding ticket over 'poor signage'

Bill Curtis

Sharron Davies will stand trial next year over a speeding ticket, after blaming a sign "so poor it was easy to miss".

Baroness Davies of Devonport, 63, a former Olympic swimmer, was driving home from a speaking event in Wales on October 15 last year when she was caught by a speed camera on the M4.

She was driving her Mini at 65mph when the speed limit had been temporarily dropped to 50mph, Bath magistrates' court was told Tuesday.

Davies, who was excused from attending the pre-trial hearing, denied the offence and has opted for a trial.

In documents read out by the clerk, Davies said she prided herself on being "a good driver, but also a safe one".

She said: "It was 11.30pm at night, the signage was very unclear and I absolutely did not see clear signage to show the limit had gone down ... There was still three lanes of very, very light traffic and, most importantly, no workmen."

She added: "I most definitely would have dropped my speed if I had been aware of the reduction. In 45 years of driving I have never contested a s-

Sharron Davies said she was a "good driver, but also a safe one"

peeding fine. But I am adamant that the signage was so poor it was easy to miss, which is what must have happened."

Davies, from Wiltshire, was represented by Laura Singleton, a solicitor, who said visibility was the issue of the case and that an expert had been instructed to provide a report.

Mark Thorpe, for the prosecution, said evidence would be put before the court to show that the signage was sufficient.

Presiding justice Gail Bragg, said: "This matter is now going to be adjourned for a case management hearing on October 21. In the meantime, there will be full disclosure by the prosecution to the defence."

A trial is likely to take place next year.

Davies, an Olympic silver medallist, was nominated for a life peerage last year by the Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch. In a swimming career that spanned three decades, she won two Commonwealth Games gold medals and broke more than 200 British records before she retired in 1994.

Single US investment trust owns one in 20 British care homes

Poppy Koronka Health Correspondent
Jack Barnett Economics Correspondent

An American property investment trust owns about 5 per cent of all care homes in Britain, a Times audit has revealed.

Welltower Inc owns the property of five profit-generating care providers, which run hundreds of homes between them. Estimates have suggested there are 18,000 care homes in Britain, 85 per cent of which are for-profit. Welltower owns about 920.

Andy Burnham has announced reforms to social care, including a crackdown on for-profit care homes, which he branded as "profiteering" off the "backs of vulnerable people".

Councils spend £34.5 billion a year on social care services, but researchers have warned that much of this cash is "leaking out of the system, extracted as profit and investor returns", rather than being used to improve services.

Welltower is a real estate investment trust (Reit), meaning it owns properties that care home chains use for the residential offerings. The care homes lease back these estates from Welltower.

Natasha Curry, deputy director of policy at the Nuffield Trust think tank, said it was often hard to find out exactly where the money in the for-profit care sector was going. While 85 per cent of care homes are run for profit, many are family-run practices that can have a positive impact.

"It's surprisingly difficult, when you look at the Care Quality Commission data, to find which [homes] are private equity backed. The ownership of these organisations is quite opaque," Curry said, speaking about the for-profit care sector generally. "With the potential to funnel profit to offshore accounts — that's where the problem is, and I think that is where Andy Burnham wants to focus," Curry added.

Reits such as Welltower collect money from investors and mostly channel this capital into buildings or land to generate profits, which are then redistributed to the original investors. They do not invest in property via leverage or debt and are not short-term, private equity investors. They do not directly have control over day-to-day operations of care homes, and do not own or operate the care home business or set fees for residents.

Barchester Healthcare runs about 260 care homes in Britain, where fees for self-funding residents average £1,426 per week for residential care and £1,636 per week for nursing care, according to Lottie, a market intelligence provider. Welltower acquired the company last year for £5.2 billion. The trust also owns HC-One, Care UK, Aria Care and Danforth Care.

Welltower said: "We are proud to be a long-term investor in the UK, using specialist capital to deliver healthcare infrastructure for local operators to grow and provide care throughout the country.

Through our commitment to long-term investing and innovation, 85 per cent of Welltower-owned properties have been rated good or outstanding, far above the national average of 72 per cent."

Barchester Healthcare, HC-One and Care UK were contacted for comment.

Drought helps golfer hit record hole-in-one

An amateur golfer has hit a 411-yard (376-metre) hole-in-one, which golfing authorities believe could be an English record (Mark Ludlow writes).

Matthew Vigurs, from Droitwich, Worcestershire, said it was "surreal" after finding his ball in the hole at the par-four third hole at Great Barr Golf Club in Birmingham on July 25.

The record, which has yet to be confirmed by England Golf, comes as amateur golfers say the UK's hot and dry conditions have added many extra metres to their tee-shots this summer.

While courses can water their greens, many have been unable to water the fairways, with the resulting harder bounce of the ball producing record drives.

Vigurs's monster drive was just short of the world record for a hole-in-one which is held by Robert Mitera, who achieved a 447-yard (408-metre) shot at the altitude-assisted Miracle Hills golf course in Nebraska in 1965.

England Golf estimated the odds of an albatross, in which a golfer records a stroke three under par on a single hole, was about one in six million. Hole-in-ones are normally recorded on shorter par-three holes.

Vigurs, 32, who had previously achieved three hole-in-ones, was playing with three friends.

"We all hit good drives and we found three of them down there. Then we were looking for mine," he said.

Vigurs checked the fairway about 50 yards short of the green and then checked behind the green.

"At that point I looked a bit silly, so I thought I might as well check the hole — and there it was, nestled in the bottom.

"I had to take two or three looks. I couldn't believe it. They [his friends] didn't believe me till I pulled it out of the hole and we just went mad."

Vigurs, a product and training manager for McLaren, admitted he could not concentrate on the next hole.

The Worcestershire first-team player, who plays off a +1 handicap, has been in form since he started playing golf again in February after eight years abroad. He won the Droitwich Club Championship, where he also notched a hole-in-one, and the Worcestershire County Championships.

James Crampton, championships director at England Golf, told Vigurs to enjoy his "purple patch".

"We hear of holes in one all the time, but a 411-yard one — it's the stuff of golfers' dreams," he said. "At the odds of six million to one for an albatross, the fact his [shot] was from such a distance has to be even greater."

MATT VIGURS/SWNS

Matthew Vigurs initially could not find his ball after his massive drive at the par-four hole, top left

Warning as one in five cars are late for MoT tests

Andrew Ellson
Consumer Affairs Correspondent

Millions of motorists are flouting the annual MoT rules as police enforcement struggles to keep pace.

A freedom of information request to the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) has found that more than one in every five cars taken for an MoT over the past three years already had an expired certificate.

This means an average of more than eight million cars every year are being driven without a valid MoT, some of them for many months at a time.

Eight police forces that have publicly disclosed enforcement figures recorded a combined 2,370 motorists caught driving without a valid MoT over a 12-month period. That equates to fewer than 300 cases per force each year on average. If replicated across England and Wales's 43 police forces, it would amount to only about 12,700 motorists a year, fewer than one in every 650.

The comparison is not exact. The DVSA figures record vehicles that arrived with a late MoT, and this does not necessarily mean the cars were driven illegally. Some may have been kept off the road, while others may have been travelling to pre-booked MoT appointments, which is permitted.

However, the figures suggest allowing an MoT to lapse has become commonplace. Between 2023 and 2025, almost nine million overdue MoTs were more than a month late, while almost 2.4 million were more than six months overdue. The average delay rose from 79 days in 2023 to 85 days last year.

The findings are likely to reignite debate over whether the annual system remains appropriate as vehicles become more reliable.

Ben Welham, of the car dealer cinch which conducted the FOI request, said: "An expired MoT should never be treated as a minor admin issue. Driving without a valid MoT can lead to a fine of up to £1,000, and the safety risks are just as important."

Children hurt and killed by e-scooters

Laurence Sleator
Transport Correspondent

Jacob Calland was 14 years old when the e-scooter he was riding collided with a BMW in March last year. Flung onto the road, he suffered catastrophic head injuries and died in hospital eight days later.

The Manchester schoolboy's death is one of 59 highlighted by researchers who have called on the government to review the legislation on e-scooters after a spate of incidents.

Researchers led by Dr Lisa Sabir, honorary clinical research fellow at the University of Sheffield, found that since 2019 in Liverpool, Manchester and Sheffield almost 500 children have reported to trauma centres with e-scooter related injuries.

The average age of those affected was 12, and half were aged between 10 and 13. Fewer than 2 per cent of those who were injured had been wearing helmets.

"E-scooter related injuries are rising," the research, published in the Emergency Medicine Journal, said. "There is a need for greater public awareness, clear public health messaging and review of government legislation to prevent further injuries and deaths."

Carly Calland, Jacob's mother, said the figures had made her cry. "One person injured is one person too many," she said. "I'm fighting for these other people but the government is not listening, lives are being lost."

After her son's death, she set up the campaign group Jacob's Journey to call for changes to the law on private e-scooters.

At present, e-scooters are legal on British streets only if rented through companies taking part in government-backed trials, meaning that riders must hold a valid driving licence with the speed of the vehicles capped.

Use of private e-scooters on public roads is banned and the police are expected to seize any found on the streets.

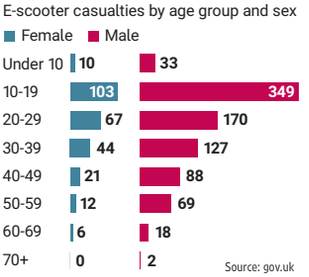
However, up to 1.2 million people in England are thought to own e-scooters, and many are sold by popular retailers.

Jacob was on the back of a teenage friend's e-scooter, bought for him by his mother and capable of reaching speeds of up to 28mph, when the collision happened. The friend, who cannot be named for legal reasons, was given a non-custodial sentence.

Calland, 36, wants e-scooters to be legalised so that tougher rules can be put in place such as a licence scheme with registration plates, mandatory helmets, insurance and an age limit.

Rising numbers

E-scooter casualties by age group and sex



Source: gov.uk

"My message to the government and Andy Burnham is to get a grip of it," she said. "I don't want anyone else to go through what I have been through. I'm fighting for these other people but the government is not listening and lives are being lost."

The Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety recorded 59 fatalities in the UK related to e-scooters between July 2019 and July 2025. Ten of the deaths were people aged 18 age or under. The youngest was only nine years old.

Recent statistics from the Department for Transport (DfT), said that ten people were killed in collisions involving e-scooters last year, compared with six in 2024. Of these, 43 involved children aged under 10. The group most likely to be involved was boys aged between 10 and 19.

The injuries recorded included four puncture wounds, 73 head injuries and nine broken necks or backs.

Last week, an NHS study of major trauma data showed that e-scooter riders have a significantly higher risk than cyclists or motorcyclists of severe brain and organ injuries.

David Bodansky, a consultant hand, trauma and orthopaedic surgeon at Chelsea and Westminster hospital NHS foundation trust, said that the small wheels were easy to jam onto potholes, potentially sending riders suddenly over the handlebars.

Olly Glover, transport spokesperson for the Liberal Democrats, said: "The time has come for central government to move on from trials of e-scooters and give local councils and users a clear regulatory framework, backed up by visible police enforcement."

The DfT said: "These are concerning findings, and our thoughts are with anyone who has been injured on our roads.

"It is illegal for private e-scooters to be used on roads, pavements or in other public spaces, including by under-16s, and we're bringing forward new laws to make their use safe and legal, including consulting on requirements like helmets."

News

DARYLGILL/WESTBAYPHOTOGRAPHY/BNPS

Highly dangerous
A teenage boy risks his life by standing on the edge of a 150ft cliff at West Bay, Dorset. The 180 million-year-old cliffs, which featured in the ITV crime drama Broadchurch, are prone to rockfalls and nine have been recorded in the past year. The boy eventually sat down to watch the sunset

Cottrell moves his business into Reform's tower

Max Kendix Washington Correspondent
George Greenwood
Investigations Reporter
Eleanor Tait

The convicted fraudster who secretly bankrolled Nigel Farage has moved his company's address to the same building as Reform UK's headquarters, amid questions over how close he remains to the party.

Reform UK has said George Cottrell has no role in the party and that he paid for Farage's private security, staff, transport and accommodation in a purely personal capacity.

Cottrell was seen in Reform UK's headquarters in Millbank Tower, Westminster, last month, with a source in the offices claiming he was "seemingly unfussed about being spotted".

Geostrategy International Unlimited, set up by Cottrell last year, changed its registered address from the address of a company formation provider in the City of London to Millbank Tower.

The company's website also updated its address to Millbank Tower on its "Contact" page, alongside an address in Delaware. The website says the company provides opinion polling, "market intelligence and competitor research" and "brand positioning and demographic analysis" among its services.

A spokesman for Reform said the party did not share an office space with Cottrell, saying the tower was a "huge building" with "plenty of office free space to rent". A representative of Millbank Tower said Geostrategy did not have an office space in the building.

When approached by a Times reporter, the building receptionist did not recognise the company's name, which was not listed on a board of occupants.

Reform UK has consistently claimed it did not need to declare benefits in kind given to Farage by Cottrell ahead of the general election in 2024, as they were classified as "purely personal gifts" under House of Commons rules. Farage said he had "taken nothing" from Cottrell since June 2024.

Cottrell's lawyers did not respond to a request for comment on his company's new address.

The Commons standards commissioner was investigating the gifts in kind as well as an undeclared donation of £5 million to Farage in 2024 by Christopher Harborne, a crypto billionaire based in Thailand.

Farage's decision to resign as an MP and stand in the subsequent by-election in his Clacton seat put the investigation on pause, but it will resume if, as predicted, he returns to the Commons after tomorrow's by-election.

If the Commons standards committee recommends a suspension of ten days or longer, and that decision is upheld by MPs, voters in Clacton could force another by-election.

Cottrell pleaded guilty to a charge of wire fraud in the US after attending the Republican National Convention in Ohio in 2016, and served eight months in maximum security prisons in Arizona and Illinois. He has been petitioning President Trump for a pardon, which has so far been unsuccessful.

A White House official told The Times: "President Trump is the ultimate decider on any clemency-related actions. We have no announcements related to this request. Anyone is eligible to apply for a pardon and an individual's choice to submit an application should not be interpreted as anything other than an individual has chosen to submit an application."

George Cottrell was spotted "unfussed" in Reform's HQ

Labour's Creasy harassed on Tube train by 'psychopath'

Marieta Marinova

A 63-year-old man has been found guilty of harassing the Labour MP Stella Creasy after he was "abusive and aggressive" on a Tube train.

Clifford Wilby, of east London, saw the MP for Walthamstow on July 15 last year on a Victoria line train between Walthamstow Central and Finsbury Park stations, Westminster magistrates' court was told yesterday.

Creasy told the court that she had been blocked from getting off the train by Wilby who had previously described himself as a psychopath. Wilby talked to her about knife crime and her "failings as a member of parliament", and filmed her.

Members of the public intervened. A man tried to get between Creasy and Wilby, and a woman told Wilby to stop and that what he was doing was harassment. The MP was able to leave the train later through another door.

The court was told that Creasy first met Wilby via Zoom in 2024, in her capacity as an MP, when he started to make a complaint about a constituent. She had told him that she could not discuss another person's case.

The meeting had to be ended because Wilby became abusive. Creasy said that he had "made a series of very serious allegations" and "referred to the fact he had been diagnosed as a psychopath".

Tan Ikram, the deputy chief magistrate, found Wilby guilty of using threatening, abusive, or insulting words or behaviour to cause harassment, alarm or distress.

"His actions clearly were such that [they] were not only causing alarm to Stella Creasy but ... also demonstrated clearly that that was his intent," Ikram said.

Wilby will be sentenced on September 8.

Stella Creasy is the MP for Walthamstow

Actress who starred as Dawn in The Office reveals incurable cancer

Marieta Marinova

Lucy Davis, who played the secretary in *The Office*, has revealed that she has incurable breast cancer but promised to keep working as "acting is one of the biggest joys in my life".

Davis, 53, who is best known for her role as Dawn Tinsley in the BBC sitcom, shared a social media post saying that she had stage four breast cancer diagnosed a year and a half ago. The cancer had since "metastasised to my bones", she said. "Specifically to my spine, right hip and my ribs. The cancer is incurable, and too late for chemo."

She admitted she "almost didn't bother" getting the initial lump checked. "So I guess I'm saying don't ignore anything, get everything checked out," she urged.

The post read: "As some of you will know, the pain can really be something else. Standing and walking for too long a time can be hard, and I need to use a wheelchair sometimes (so if you see me toddling around in one, feel free to give me a push!)" Despite the pain, Davis said that she was trying to "live out whatever might be left of my life in as fun a way as I possibly can".

Lucy Davis says her cancer has spread to her spine

Davis, daughter of the comedian Jasper Carrott, is an animal rights and vegan activist. In 2007 she featured in a poster campaign for People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. She said she intended to continue her work for animal rights and as an actress.

Country living loses appeal as demand for cottages fades

Tom Howard Property Correspondent

A dry-stone wall and thatched roof. Lavender lining the pathway to a doorway framed by roses. An English countryside cottage is, for many people, the dream home. Or is it?

Demand for cottages soared during the pandemic lockdowns when people moved to the countryside for the space and fresh air, or bought second homes. It coincided with the emergence of "cottagecore", a social media trend led by influencers on TikTok who romanticised simple, *Good Life*-style living in picturesque cottages.

Property prices in the most bucolic parts of the country, such as Devon, Cornwall and Pembrokeshire, surged. But with life having returned to something like normal and employers ordering their staff back into the office, the pull of the coast or countryside is weakening.

Tax changes have affected cottage sales in the Cotswolds and elsewhere

Cottage pile-up

	Value one year ago	Value now	% change
North Devon	£350,494	£329,118	-6.4%
Isle of Wight	£367,763	£349,004	-5.1%
Cotswolds	£444,192	£425,474	-4.2%
South Lakeland	£310,213	£298,434	-3.8%
Dorset	£360,255	£348,213	-3.3%
East Suffolk	£331,354	£324,610	-2%

Source: Zoopla

Compared with three years ago, the number of people actively looking at buying a cottage has fallen by a third, according to data from Zoopla, the property search website. This reflects a combination of higher mortgage rates and extra taxes on second homeowners. In summer 2020 the average two-year fixed mortgage rate was about 2 per cent, according to Moneyfacts. Now it is above 5 per cent.

Since last year, people buying an additional property have had to pay an extra 5 per cent in stamp duty, and local authorities are now also able to charge second homeowners double the local rate of council tax.

Fewer inquiries from prospective buyers are translating into fewer sales of cottages, which is leading to lower prices. Zoopla's data shows that there have been 13 per cent fewer cottage sales so far in 2026 compared with the same period last year, while the number of cottages on the market has fallen by 9 per cent.

The average UK cottage is worth £321,641 at present, which is 0.3 per cent lower than a year ago. This decline contrasts with the wider market, where house prices have increased by an average of 1.3 per cent over the past year.

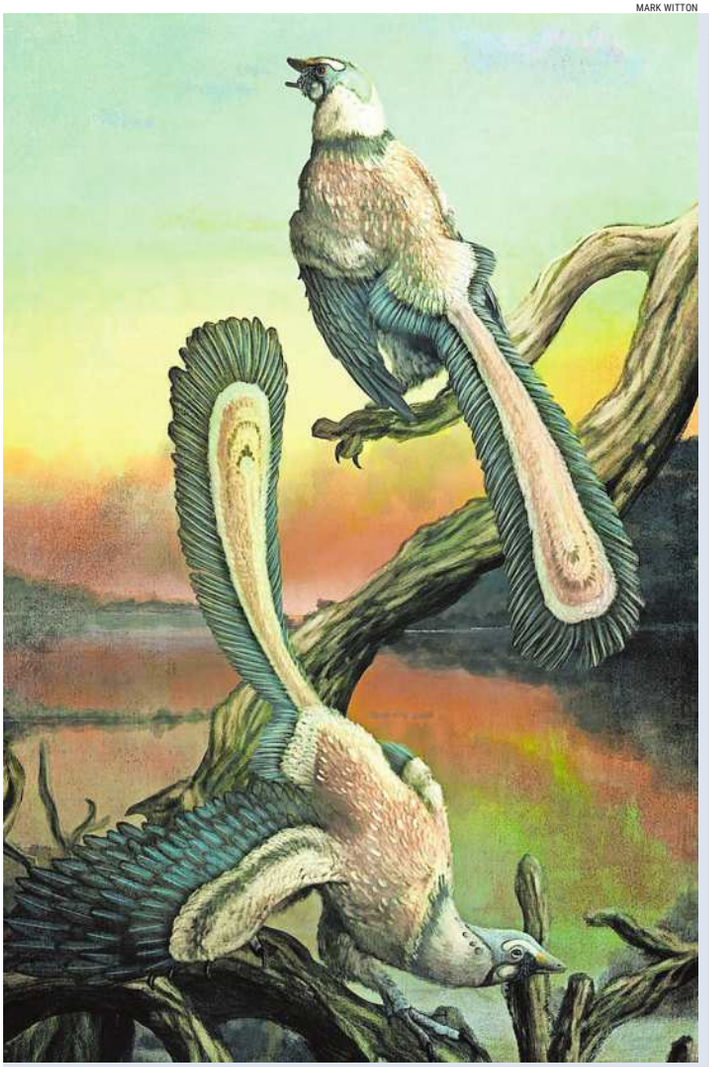
In a reversal of what occurred during the lockdown-induced "race for space", the biggest price drops have been seen in north Devon, where cottages are worth 6.1 per cent less than they were a year ago. In Ceredigion in Wales, cottage prices have fallen by 6 per cent over the past 12 months, while in East Lindsey, an area that includes Skegness, Lincolnshire, prices are down 5.7 per cent.

In 18 of 24 "second-home hot spots" that Zoopla analysed, cottage values have dropped faster than standard residential properties in the same postcodes. There was a similar trend even in Cornwall, the largest single market for character cottages and second homes, where cottage values have declined by 1.3 per cent since last summer.

Nick Maud, lead analyst at Connells Group, said: "Part of the story is the unwinding of extraordinary gains made in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic. Demand and prices in picturesque, rural locations surged during the widely publicised 'race for space'.

"Buyers paid record prices for what they perceived as a better quality of life with greater access to nature and private outdoor space. However, inflationary pressures and a looser labour market have created a sense of growing precarity. Meanwhile, specific policies, such as the increased stamp duty surcharge and council tax premium for second homes, have also reduced the appeal of country boltholes for a certain kind of buyer. This means many would-be sellers that bought in the last few years are finding out their home is no longer worth what they paid for it."

MARK WITTON



The archaeopteryx dates back about 150 million years. Its lack of mobility compared with modern birds prompted a study to discover how it took off

'First bird' used hops to fly over dinosaurs

They may have had wings and feathers, but the first birds that emerged 150 million years ago still retained "distinctly dinosaur" features (Kaya Burgess writes). So how on earth did they get off the ground to fly?

Taking to the air required several leaps of faith for the archaeopteryx, according to scientists who described its technique as "hop, hop and away".

The researchers have addressed a mystery that had puzzled experts in a study examining the "transition from ground-dwelling dinosaurs to powered flight in birds".

One of the study's authors, Dr Neil Gostling, a palaeobiologist at the University of Southampton, said the archaeopteryx was "the first real bird", adding: "It was covered in feathers and possessed wings, but also retained a number of distinctly dinosaur features, such as a long bony tail, claws on separate fingers, and teeth in a beakless jaw."

An asteroid strike wiped out non-avian dinosaurs 66 million years ago. But the avian dinosaurs survived thanks to their smaller size, ability to eat a wide range of different foods and capacity for flight.

The archaeopteryx was about the same size as a magpie or raven, but unlike modern birds it had limited mobility and no breastbone to act as an anchor for powerful chest muscles. Markus Heller, a professor of biomechanics at Southampton, said: "We know [it] couldn't rely on its wings to take off — with no keeled sternum, and a shoulder that couldn't lift the wing above the back — so we asked what its legs could contribute. It turns out that is where take-off is won — the legs generate the force, and the wings take over afterwards."

The researchers analysed the take-off technique of birds from gulls and magpies to crows and finches. They examined joint movements at the hip, knee and ankle, and estimated the velocity the archaeopteryx would have needed to leave the ground.

Dr Erik Meilak, a former PhD researcher at Southampton and the lead author of the study published in the journal Developmental Biology, said: "A mid-sized, 400g archaeopteryx could have achieved a sustainable flight speed of 7 metres per second [16mph] with three bipedal leaps, or with two bipedal leaps with a downward flap between jumps."

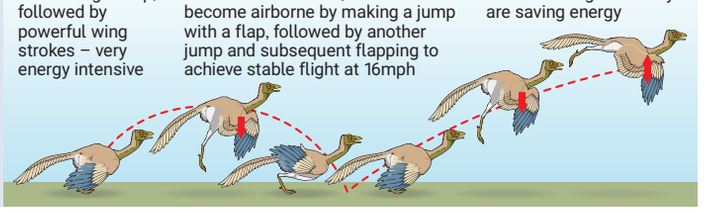
Gostling explained: "Archaeopteryx would have either taken off with a leap, leap, leap and then lots of flapping, or a leap, a flap, another leap and more flapping." Many birds, including crows, magpies and seagulls, still use the technique, he said: "They use one leap if startled, stressed or threatened, or — like their ancestors — two or three or more if they are saving energy."

Learning to fly

Modern birds can leave the ground with a single leap, followed by powerful wing strokes – very energy intensive

A 400g archaeopteryx, which lacked a breastbone to harness the power of its chest muscles, could have become airborne by making a jump with a flap, followed by another jump and subsequent flapping to achieve stable flight at 16mph

This take-off is still used by modern birds such as crows or seagulls if they are saving energy



WATTIE CHEUNG

Multiplication class Six sets of twins and a set of triplets gave their new uniforms an airing at Miller Primary School in Glasgow yesterday. The twins are among 56 sets due to start school in the city today

Not OK, computer: Spotify to downgrade AI-generated 'slop'

Mark Sellman
Technology Correspondent

Spotify will label AI artists and downgrade their music in its latest move against "slop" content.

The music streamer said that from September it would identify such artists as "AI personas" and exclude their music from editorial and algorithmic recommendations.

Spotify said: "Listeners have been clear in telling us that they don't like seeing an artist profile that seems human, only to find out that the persona is AI-generated."

Streamers have been grappling with a surge of AI-generated content since the emergence of music platforms such as Suno and Udio, which enable tracks to be created using text prompts.

Last year an AI band called Velvet Sundown went viral on Spotify, generating controversy about transparency.

Jacub, a fictional folk-pop artist, topped Spotify's chart in Sweden in January but was excluded from the country's official chart.

IngaRose, an AI R&B artist, reached No 1 on iTunes in April with a song generated on Suno.

Last month Deezer, a French streamer, said fully AI-generated music was the majority of daily uploads, reaching 90,000 per day. The service labels tracks as AI-generated and excludes them from its recommendations. It said up to 85 per cent of the streams created by fully AI-generated tracks were used for fraud last year. Bots were created to play music to generate royalties.

Tidal, another streamer, labels individual AI tracks and does not pay out royalties for them.

More than a third of tracks uploaded to Apple Music are "100 per cent AI" and they are labelled as such as part of a voluntary industry scheme.

Spotify's policy appears to target the identities of the artists rather than individual AI-generated tracks.

The platform said it would review artists and label them as AI personas when "the identity an artist presents on their profile, including name and imagery, appears to represent photorealistic AI-generated identities". This suggests AI music from humans could continue to find its way into recommended lists.

Velvet Sundown is an AI-generated band that went viral on the streamer

Spotify recently announced a deal with Universal that allows premium users to use an AI tool to remix their favourite tracks.

The music industry has been pushing streamers to adopt a more consistent approach to identifying AI content. Last month it announced two labels, "AI-Generated" and "AI-Assisted", which it hopes the services will use. Record labels also called on chart organisers to introduce rules that would only allow AI-generated songs to be included if they are substantially human-made and lawful.

Michael Price, an Emmy-winning composer, said: "Any efforts to restore trust between Spotify and its listeners are really welcome, but the fact that streaming services are so awash with AI slop music makes this feel more King Canute than King Crimson."

He added: "I'd love a big button on the home page that you could press to say 'never play me AI tracks'."

Ed Newton-Rex, chief executive of Fairly Trained, said: "Labelling AI personas is a distraction ... Spotify continues to refuse to label the thing that really matters: if a song is made with AI."

A website called SlopTracker, created by Swiss music producer Niklas Thal, claims to allow users to identify AI tracks on Spotify.

Last month a court in Munich upheld a European copyright lawsuit against Suno brought by a German collecting society over the unauthorised use of songs such as *Rasputin* by Boney M. and *Forever Young* by Alphaville.

Digital watermark to catch writers who use bots

Mark Sellman

Passing off AI writing as your own is about to get a little bit harder.

Anthropic, a leading AI company, has said that it will embed a hidden watermark in the text output of its Claude chatbot to identify it as AI-generated or processed. The mark will be invisible to the human eye, will travel with the text when it is copied and pasted and could survive some editing.

Anthropic is introducing the mark as a result of a new European Union law that requires AI output to be labelled as such after publishers were accused of passing off AI content as their own. Schools and universities are also grappling with how to assess whether students have used AI in their work.

However, Anthropic warned that the watermark "provides a signal that content was processed by Claude, but is not fully conclusive". The mark will be added to text even when Claude is used to edit or proofread.

Conversely the lack of a mark does not mean that Claude was not used, as substantial changes can remove it, as could changing formats.

Google has introduced a similar watermark, SynthID, for its AI output, which is also used by OpenAI for images and audio generated by ChatGPT. OpenAI abandoned its own attempt for a text watermark in 2023 because of the difficulties attached to it.

A popular tool to identify AI-generated text is Pangram which claims to have an overall false-positive rate of about 1 in 10,000. It was used to identify AI text in the novel *Shy Girl* by Mia Ballard, which was subsequently withdrawn from bookshops. However, when it was used to accuse the winner of the Commonwealth Short Story Prize of using AI, the Commonwealth Foundation rejected the claims.

The latest controversy centres on the author Jerry Falade, whose publishing deal for his debut crime novel *Call Me, I'll Hide the Body* collapsed amid claims of AI use. He denied using the technology, said the claims were racially motivated and highlighted that AI detectors had well-known false-positive problems.

University to seek three Bs as minimum

Nicola Woolcock Education Editor

A Russell Group university is introducing a minimum standard of three Bs at A-level for the first time in a move intended to protect standards.

The University of Birmingham's vice-chancellor claimed public money was being wasted at some institutions on loans for students who were unlikely to benefit because they were not given enough support.

Adam Tickell said Birmingham's new requirement applied across all courses apart from social work and nursing, where life experience would be taken into account.

Hundreds of thousands of sixth-formers will receive A-level results and equivalent qualifications tomorrow and record numbers of school leavers are expected to go to university.

Some institutions are lowering entry requirements, even on popular courses, to make up for a shortage of international students, which they blame on stricter visa rules and unwelcoming rhetoric. However, Tickell said: "We started bringing in tougher requirements last year but it's really clear to us that we need our students all to thrive. It's better for everybody if we've got the best-qualified students we can get. And we'd rather have fewer numbers if that's the outcome."

Student loan debt in England will hit £300 billion by the end of this academic year (2025-26), according to the House of Commons Library, double the amount owed in 2020-21. It is forecast to reach £500 billion in today's prices by the late 2040s. Tickell said: "If you've got no A-levels or equivalents in other exams, I don't see how you can get into university and thrive. The students who come in with the lowest qualifications, some of them are really talented and the rest are a poor deal." Those who did well were often given a lot of costly "scaffolding" and support, he said.

Young adults lonelier than elderly in WFH era

Sanchez Manning
Social Affairs Correspondent

Loneliness and isolation used to be social problems that were primarily associated with the elderly.

But new research has revealed it is now young adults rather than older generations who are more likely to be lonely.

Young men in particular are spending increasing amounts of time on their own.

A study by the think tank the Resolution Foundation, entitled "All By Myself", analysed diary data to explore how daily patterns of time spent alone had changed by age over the past ten years.

It found that men aged 18 to 29 spent more than two fifths of their waking time alone in 2023. That is the equivalent of six and a half hours a day.

This figure marks a two-hour increase in the time this group are on their own during the day compared with a decade earlier.

Similarly, over the same time period, young women were found to be spending an additional one and a half hours a day alone — about five hours a day in total.

But, in comparison, older people are now alone less, with women over 60 and men over 70 spending about one to one and a half fewer hours a day on their own than a decade earlier, the study found.

Young people are also more likely to feel lonely than their older counterparts.

Adults aged 18 to 29 reported feeling lonely 14 per cent of the time, twice the rate of 60 to 69-year-olds.

While the surge in young adults spending more time alone is partly due to the move towards solo screen-based activities such as playing computer games and scrolling on smartphones, researchers concluded that the biggest driver of young people's increasing isolation was the rise in working from home.

Most significantly, men aged 18-29 now spend one and a half hours more a day doing work alone than they did in the mid-2010s.

Parth Pandya, a researcher at the Resolution Foundation and author of the paper, said: "Screen time is the usual suspect in conversations about the rise in loneliness among young people.

"But time spent doing paid work by themselves was the biggest driver of rising hours spent alone, with working from home — a legacy of the Covid-19 pandemic — accounting for the majority of this.

"If policymakers are serious about improving young people's wellbeing, then work needs to be part of the debate as much as screen time."

Pandya said that while "alone time" could be "restorative", there could also be negative implications for health and wellbeing. The research showed that 18 to 29-year-olds who were frequently online were nearly four percentage points more likely to be lonely (16 per cent) than those who were not (12 per cent).

The people in this age group who reported being in bad health in 2023 were also found to spend three more hours a day alone compared with young people in the same age range in 2014-15.

Men aged 18 to 29 spend two fifths of their waking time alone

This pattern was not found to be replicated for the older age groups.

"With young people now more likely to be alone and lonely, time use is key to conversations about intergenerational inequality going forward," the study said.

TMS

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Jess's bust-up at the Fringe

Jess Phillips received much applause at the Edinburgh Fringe, though host Iain Dale pointed out his previous guest, Zack Polanski, got more "whoops". Phillips was unimpressed: "I don't think he is actually being himself." A reasonable observation, given that Polanski, below, isn't even the name on his birth certificate. Her main issue, however, is his past career as a hypnotherapist who claimed to enlarge breasts using mind power. "During Covid I had my boobs reduced, and I worry if I spent any time with Zack Polanski, they might get bigger again," Phillips confessed, revealing that her back is "very grateful". To sweeten the post-op recovery "my mother-in-law gave me two Chelsea buns on the day".

AUDITING NICOLA'S ROUND

Dale then steered their chat to the Fringe's drinking scene. Phillips admitted hangovers are tricky for MPs, adding, "you have to think about everywhere you go". When Dale teased that a late night with Nicola Sturgeon was to blame, Phillips demurred: "We were not out drinking — though if she paid for a round, I'd want to know where the money came from."

Jason Arday is in good company. Even Sir Simon Schama admits to a spot of plagiarism to advance himself. The historian tells the Radio Times that his teenage attempts to court the daughter of William Frankel, the former editor of The Jewish Chronicle, hit a snag when Frankel insisted Schama write classical music reviews for parental approval. "That's extremely kind, Mr Frankel, but I know next to nothing about this," Schama protested. He took the gig anyway and lifted adjectives such as "lyrical, tender and passionate" from Neville Cardus's reviews in the Manchester Guardian. Schama's contributions to Key Changes: Radio 3's Essential History of Classical Music *— broadcast next weekend — are, of course, his own work.*

A TONIC FOR THE EGO

After my story about the late John Woodcock — whose trust in village goodwill left his car always unlocked — Mark Mason, the diary's trivia guru, points to a stark contrast: the legendary cricket writer EW Swanton. The historian Rowland Bowen dubbed "Swanton Pomponius Ego", a moniker with a firm basis in reality. As the late Ray Illingworth recalled, Swanton expected a gin and tonic on cue the moment he graced a cricket ground, and was far too snobbish to ride in the same car as his chauffeur.

Donald Trump's former advisor Roger Stone should have consulted a British proofreader before launching his fashion website. Its URL — stoneswank.com — reads awkwardly without spaces. As the Atlantic writer, Helen Lewis, observed: "Even for Americans, a working knowledge of UK English is an asset."

PERFECT PART FOR A 'PRAT'

Yesterday's story mentioning Andy Burnham's favourite club, the Haçienda, reminded a reader of its late co-founder Tony Wilson. When Wilson died in 2007, Steve Coogan missed the funeral while in the US. In a Manchester Evening News obituary, Coogan said his greatest accolade was the bassist Peter Hook's verdict on his part as Wilson in *24 Hour Party People*: "The biggest prat in Manchester was played by the second biggest prat in Manchester." It's possible that the language has been slightly moderated.

ED HALFORD

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News

Don't use the dishwasher during eclipse

Herbie Russell
Emily Gosden Energy Editor

Britain's biggest energy supplier has urged customers to avoid running appliances while the eclipse "knocks out" some of the country's solar power generation this evening.

Octopus Energy, which supplies more than eight million households, said that cutting back on electricity usage between 6pm and 8pm would reduce the need to fire up polluting gas power stations.

The partial solar eclipse, expected to be the most spectacular until 2081, will peak at up to 96 per cent coverage between about 7pm and 7.15pm, depending on location. It will begin as early as 6.08pm in Edinburgh, then minutes later across the rest of the country, reducing power output from solar panels.

Octopus said the eclipse would hit when "millions of people are getting home and electricity demand is climbing". It urged customers to "delay the dishwasher, save the laundry till later, don't bother with the oven". In return for cutting their electricity usage during the eclipse — which will be monitored using smart meter data — Octopus is offering customers who are signed up to its rewards programme a free hour of electricity on Sunday.

The eclipse coincides with the UK's fifth heatwave of the summer, which is likely to increase electricity demand for air conditioning, fans and fridges.

Heatwaves have placed unprecedented strain on Britain's power grid this summer with the National Energy System Operator (Neso) forced to issue its first ever summertime warnings of tight electricity supplies in late June.

However, Neso says it has been planning for the eclipse's impact for a year and indicated that it regards the probable loss of solar supplies as a "drop in the ocean".

Britain has peak solar generation of about 16.3 gigawatts, but because the eclipse is late in the day — and sunlight will not be blocked to the same degree at the same time across the country — it estimates that the maximum impact of lost generation will be 1.3 gigawatts. Its best estimate is that the impact will be about 700 megawatts.

Demand on recent evenings has been around 30 gigawatts, although during the late June heatwave it exceeded 35 gigawatts on some evenings.

Neso expects that demand this evening will be lower than it would otherwise have been as many people are expected to head out to watch the eclipse.

Rebecca Dibb-Simkin, the chief customer officer at Octopus Energy, said: "By shifting everyday tasks like the washing machine or dishwasher until later, households can help reduce the need for gas power stations — and earn rewards for doing their bit."

Neso is facing scrutiny after Britain's power grid experienced an unusually prolonged drop in frequency owing to scarce supplies on June 23, when a leaked internal report seen by The Times shows that safety limits were breached and "system security was compromised". Whistleblowers claim the country came close to blackouts.

Chris Hewett, the chief executive of Solar Energy UK, an industry trade body, said: "We do not expect any undue effects on the grid from the eclipse, not least as it will happen when relatively little solar generation normally occurs."

The southwest will witness the greatest eclipse: 95.8 per cent of the sun will be covered at Land's End, 95.6 per cent at Lizard Point and 96.5 per cent at Bishop Rock in the Isles of Scilly. Cardiff and Belfast will experience about 93 per cent, while London, Birmingham, Manchester and Edinburgh will have about 91 per cent.

A Neso spokesman said: "Wednesday's solar eclipse is something we've been planning and are fully prepared for. So as millions of Britons drop what they're doing and head outside to enjoy the spectacle, our control room will be expertly managing the network."

BAV MEDIA; SANTI OTERO//EPA

Protective glasses have sold out in pharmacies as tourists and researchers, top, flock to northern Spain, including the Roman amphitheatre in Tarragona, for a view of the solar eclipse

Spain cashing in on astronomical demand

Not a single rental car is left at Barcelona airport (David Sharrock writes). Roads are choked, train tickets have sold out and hotels are all full.

Spain is in the grip of eclipse fever. Millions of visitors were already racing yesterday to nab the best seats in the northern swathe of the country which, along with the western coast of Iceland, is the only place in Europe that will see a total solar eclipse.

In the River Ebro delta, about 120 miles south of Barcelona, visitors will get a spectacular view this evening: a solar eclipse hovering over the sea before seemingly dissolving into it.

Those with deep pockets and the foresight to book at least a year in advance have taken exclusive options such as the Hotel Villa Retiro, in Xerta, where Fran López is head chef of its Michelin-starred restaurant.

"It is going to be a very special day," López told The Times. "We've had reservations made by Americans for over a year now ... We always give our guests gifts and this week they are getting a pair of eclipse glasses. Everyone here is talking of nothing else."

Those guests should count themselves lucky, as protective glasses have sold out in pharmacies along the route of the eclipse.

Anya Schoolman, from Washington, is hoping to see her third eclipse. "There really is something magical about being in the totality," she said.

Scientists have flown from as far as Malaysia to record the event.

Tourism officials believe this eclipse — the first of three in three years — will establish Spain as Europe's eclipse-chasing capital.

However, in the Balearic islands, where the public mood is turning against overtourism, the event has been played down. Mallorca has announced that the Serra de Tramuntana, where the roads are littered with spectacular viewpoints, will be closed to traffic.

Look to the heavens from church, or drink it in at a rooftop bar

Kaya Burgess Science and Religious Affairs Correspondent

Rooftop bars, castles, river cruises and businesses with skyscraper HQs are gearing up for eclipse viewing events today, while churches have been encouraged to use the rare celestial phenomenon as an opportunity to talk about God.

The most spectacular eclipse to pass over Britain since 1999 will be visible from shortly after 6pm, reaching its fullest extent between about 7.05pm and 7.16pm depending on where you are in the country. The moon will cover up to 96 per cent of the sun's disc. The next similarly deep eclipse will not be seen over Britain until 2050 and the next total eclipse over the country is not until 2090.

Just hours after the eclipse, the Perseid meteor shower is set to peak.

As astronomers and eye doctors warn people not to look directly at the eclipse, the scramble to find eclipse-viewing glasses continued yesterday, with most online retailers sold out. Queues of up to 300 people were seen snaking around Spitalfields Market in east London where a stall was selling them for £5.

The Methodist Church encouraged its thousands of churches to host viewing events for local communities as a way of "delighting in the beauty of creation" and encouraging "meaningful conversations about life and faith". A meditation by the Rev Michaela Youngson says: "This eclipse reminds us of the reliability of God, reassures us that light will follow darkness."

The Easton Jamia mosque in Bristol will be holding a service including the Salat al-Kusuf, a prayer for eclipses.

The Subside rock bar in Birmingham is hosting a party offering "eclipse cocktails" and Roof East, a rooftop venue in London, is hosting a "see you on the dark side" party offering free eclipse glasses with drinks. The CityCruises boat company is hosting an eclipse cruise along the River Thames in London, offering a view from the water, and Severndroog Castle in southeast London is holding a viewing event from its rooftop. Bamburgh Castle in Northumberland is also hosting a sold out gathering for the "once-in-a-generation solar event".

Those who work in an office with a view are preparing for after-hours viewing parties. Arma Partners, a corporate financial advice firm, based in the Shard, will be holding an event for its employees to witness the eclipse.

The Royal Observatory in Greenwich is among observatories and planetariums to host viewing events, with tickets already sold out.

Inquest hears equestrian fatally injured in fall at event

Lara Wildenberg

An eventer who had ridden the late Queen Elizabeth's horses died during a cross-country competition, an inquest was told.

Sophie Fouracre, 34, died at Swallcliffe Equestrian Park in Oxfordshire on July 18 after falling from her five-year-old mare, Rhubarbsfox Brittania, during an event. The professional eventer had just returned from a holiday in Italy with her husband, Giles, two young children and mother.

An inquest into her death was opened at Oxfordshire coroner's court last week by the area coroner Nicholas Graham. He said that the experienced rider had fallen from her horse and suffered "significant injuries". She was declared dead at the scene. A pathologist concluded that Fouracre died of "massive trauma".

Fouracre was a skilled rider, who was trusted to ride four of the late queen's horses, and she had competed three times at the Burghley Horse Trials, which is classified by the sport's governing body as one of the world's leading events. The three-day event takes place every year in Lincolnshire.

Fouracre, née Jenman, was originally from Kent but was living near Basingstoke at the time of her death. She ran an eventing company where she offered her services as a teacher and would break in client's horses. A profile from 2023 on the Burghley website said that Fouracre had ten stables on her in-laws' farm in Hampshire. It read: "She specialised in backing and producing young horses, particularly from Ireland. She rode for the late Queen, eventing four of her horses, and has just picked up an unbacked three-year-old by Speedway, owned by HRH The King, from Windsor."

The inquest is set to resume on November 23.

Hours after Fouracre's death, the equestrian world was "heartbroken" by another fatality. Kerry Donoghue, 42, a former nurse, died after a cross-country accident riding 16-year-old Carneyhaugh Rua at Penrith, Cumbria.

She had appeared on the *Equestrian Performance Mindset* podcast in the month before her death, and said that she was considering quitting the sport

after seeing a horse crush a fellow rider. She said: "You're thinking to yourself, goodness, is this all worth it? Do you really want to do this?"

Her husband Matthew Donoghue wrote a tribute after her death: "No words can describe how we are feeling at the moment. We are totally broken and Kerry will forever be in our thoughts and hearts. If you love someone, tell them you love them, kiss them, hug them ... Life for us will never be the same again."

British Eventing said at the time: "At both venues, the event medical teams

ALAMY

Sophie Fouracre fell from her horse during an event in Oxfordshire. The experienced rider, pictured above on a different horse in 2023, had suffered "massive trauma", an inquest was told

responded immediately and provided emergency treatment. Despite their best efforts sadly neither rider could be saved. Both horses were examined by the attending veterinary team and were found to be uninjured."

All competition was abandoned at both fixtures.

Rosie Williams, chief executive of British Eventing, said: "The British Eventing community is heartbroken. On behalf of everyone at British Eventing, I want to extend our deepest condolences to Kerry and Sophie's families, friends and loved ones at this devastating time. The loss of two members of our eventing family on the same day is almost beyond words, and we know the sadness of these events will be felt profoundly across the sport for some time to come."

British Eventing said that it would undertake "comprehensive reviews of both accidents".

Arrest over bus driver shot dead in Clapham

Seren Hughes
Jessica Sharkey Crime Correspondent

A man who went to hospital with a gunshot wound has been arrested on suspicion of murder after a 25-year-old bus driver was shot dead near a London pub.

Emergency services were called to reports of gunshots on a road in Clapham, south London, just before 10pm on Monday. The victim, who has not been named, was pronounced dead at the scene near the Landor pub.

The suspect, 22, was arrested shortly afterwards and remains in hospital.

A friend said the victim was in the "wrong place [at the] wrong time".

Sansha Fritz, 35, told The Times the victim had been about to take his girlfriend home when the incident took place. Fritz, who lives in Willington Road, the site of the shooting, said: "I've never even seen him shout, get out of character, hang around no one. He's just a good person. He's always smiling. He's got a beautiful smile."

Fritz said she went to the scene after hearing gunshots and saw the victim's girlfriend, who told her a man had approached them before "shots were fired". Fritz said: "All she's saying is, 'He's been shot, he's been shot.' And then I saw his mum come down. We ran to him. We saw him on the floor."

Another neighbour, who did not want to be named, said the victim had been working as a bus driver for more than a year. The neighbour said the victim's sister and mother were on the scene immediately afterwards, and his mother was heard shouting: "That's my son! That's my son!"

A woman who gave her name as Helen said: "I did hear a gunshot, like, three gunshots around. I think the majority of us thought, 'It's just a motorcycle' ... it was quiet for about a few seconds. Then we all heard shouting and crying."

A forensics tent was in place across the road from the Landor yesterday. Flowers had been laid at the scene and a candle was lit near the pub entrance.

Detective Chief Superintendent Emma Bond, of the Metropolitan Police, said: "We are asking anyone with information or anyone who may have witnessed the shooting to please contact us as soon as possible and support the ongoing investigation."

Justice system 'guilty for Levy's crimes'

Seren Hughes

A woman who was sexually assaulted by Simon Levy eight years ago has accused the justice system of allowing him to attack and kill more women.

Levy, 40, was found guilty on Friday of murdering Carmenza Valencia-Trujillo, 53, and Sheryl Wilkins, 39, last year. He was also convicted of two rapes, grievous bodily harm and intentional suffocation against another woman, who cannot be named, earlier this year. He will be sentenced today.

A previous victim, named only as Laura by the BBC, believes that Levy might have been prevented from carrying out further attacks and said that the police made her nightmare "real".

In August 2018, Laura was travelling on the London Underground with a friend when Levy followed them to Notting Hill Carnival and sexually assaulted her. He left only when chased off by a group of men.

In 2021, he was convicted of sexually assaulting her, as well as another woman he had targeted a month before Laura. He was jailed for three years but released on licence despite sexually assaulting a prison officer.

Levy was jailed for six years earlier this year after being found guilty of 11 further sexual assaults on women aged 18 to 32 between October 2023 and May 2025.

He slipped under the radar after a combination of police officer "incompetence", weak monitoring by sex offender managers and failures to remand the partially blind attacker despite his escalating crimes.

When Laura found out that Levy was going to be on trial for two murders earlier this year, she described how her heart "dropped in my stomach".

"When I reported it, I thought I was doing it to protect other women," she said, but realised what she would "have nightmares about was actually happening — he was actually still out preying on vulnerable women".

Laura said that she felt let down by the whole criminal justice system, including the Metropolitan Police, the courts and judges who bailed Levy and the Crown Prosecution Service.

She said: "They're all as guilty for allowing him to continue to do what he was doing. They could have prevented two women from losing their lives."

She added: "I hope that other victims in the future will be believed, will be dealt with differently, will be listened to straightaway, and I just hope that there's change".

A spokesperson for the Met told the BBC: "We are sorry the victim felt unsupported in this case and don't underestimate the impact this incident had on her.

"A crime report was created the following day with a wide range of inquiries carried out. Levy was identified, arrested and later convicted."

'Bunch of idiots!' Furious Sugar hits his credit limit

Aaliyah Ahmed

As one of the richest men in the UK, with a reported net worth of about £1.1 billion, it is hard to believe Lord Sugar would be reliant on his credit card. Yet *The Apprentice* star has found himself in an online row with American Express after the company refused his request for a higher credit limit.

Sugar, 79, said he was denied the increase even after staff recognised him and his "financial status".

He posted on X: "I spent a hour on the phone ... I was past (sic) to 4 different people. I was asking for an increase in my credit limit. Finally I got to speak to a person in the UK at Brighton who knew who I was and my financial status. However my request was refused due to their system."

The complaint attracted amused responses. One follower wrote: "Who are you moaning to? And why do you expect royal treatment for yourself?"

Sugar replied: "I AM NOT MOANING JUST EXPOSING WHAT A BUNCH OF IDIOTS AMEX ARE".

Lord Sugar was ranked 146th in the 2026 Sunday Times Rich List

Another user asked: "If you're worth £1.1 billion why do you need credit?"

He responded: "DO PRACTICE BEING AN IDIOT. I DON'T WALK AROUND WITH BAGS FULL OF CASH. I NEED A CREDIT CARD TO BUY THINGS."

American Express has been contacted for comment.

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News

Binned £12m lottery ticket could still win

Marieta Marinova

A woman whose £12 million lottery ticket was thrown away by a shopkeeper who claimed "there was no beep on the machine" as he checked her winning numbers has been given new hope.

Kath Main, 46, from Abercynon in south Wales, played the June 6 draw with the same numbers she has used for 20 years.

She asked her mother, Fiona, to check the ticket at their local Londis supermarket, but the shopkeeper binned it saying that it was not a winner.

Karan Kumar, the shop's owner, told The Sun: "The woman came in to check the numbers and there was no beep on the machine, nothing came up on the screen, so we just binned them."

Fiona Main confirmed that she agreed the shopkeeper could "put them in the bin", but was soon told off for this by her daughter.

Kath Main later read in the news that an unclaimed £12 million jackpot had been won in her area, Rhondda Cynon Taf. The winning numbers matched hers: 8, 10, 26, 30, 35 and 42, a combination based on her and her husband's birthdays, their ages when they started playing, and two other random numbers.

Kath Main's ticket was put in the bin by Karan Kumar, who owns the Londis in Abercynon, south Wales, after his machine failed to register her winning numbers

She said she felt like the "unluckiest person to win the lottery because I don't have the money".

Now, the operator of the National Lottery, Allwyn, has concluded a 30-day investigation into Main's case after she explained what happened, provided proof of purchase and submitted doorbell footage from a nearby hair salon showing her mother entering the shop because the Londis did not have CCTV.

Allwyn has told Main that she must wait until December 3 to receive the prize, unless someone else comes forward to claim it before then. Allwyn said it is the "only major lottery which is able to look to pay a winner even if they have lost their ticket".

The operator said: "The investigation we conduct is designed to ensure any claim is from the rightful ticketholder. We are then able, at our discretion, to pay that player once the claim period has expired 180 days after the draw."

Main, a rugby club secretary with two children, is hoping to spend some of the money on a trip to New Zealand for the British and Irish Lions rugby tour in 2029.

She said that waiting for the life-changing payout in December was making her feel "sick all the time".

Her mother previously said that if they could not prove the ticket was Main's, the winning money would have gone "back to good causes" through charity donations.

Lottery play was suspended at the Londis in Abercynon while the investigation was carried out, with the ticket machine switched off and scratchcards removed from the shelves.

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Safety fears consume Jewish schools

Nicola Woolcock Education Editor

Heads of Jewish schools are spending more time dealing with security than on education matters, an independent review has found.

Sir David Bell is leading a government-commissioned review of antisemitism in schools and colleges. Bell, vice-chancellor of the University of Sunderland and a former permanent secretary at the Department for Education, is due to publish his report in the autumn. It will examine the experiences of Jewish pupils and staff in England.

He said security was the primary concern, trumping education, for many Jewish faith schools.

Bell said he had found that pupils were subjected to regular harassment and abuse and that Jewish children and young people were facing pressure — "and indeed one might say even a crisis — that is not the experience of other communities in this country".

He has heard evidence from pupils, teachers, community organisations, governors and parents across the state and independent sectors and drawn evidence from a survey of 5,000 children by the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (Ucas). It found that about 20 per cent had experienced or observed antisemitic behaviour in schools and colleges.

Police patrol Stamford Hill in London, which has a large Jewish population

Bell told the BBC: "When you think about antisemitism, you assume that it's going to be directed towards adults. What's been quite shocking is the extent to which antisemitism is encountered by children and young people."

One head teacher said: "In recent years [security] has become an overwhelming priority and increased a significant amount ... [It] can be among the things that keep me awake at night."

Figures from the Community Security Trust (CST), which provides security for the Jewish community, show that, in the first half of this year, antisemitism in schools reached the highest level recorded for the first six months of any year. It rose from 112 reported incidents in the first half of last year to 178 in 2026.

Lucy Powell, the education secretary, said she would carefully consider the conclusions of the review, adding: "Antisemitism has no place in our society, let alone our education system. Jewish children and staff should never face hatred or prejudice."

Jonathan Frisher, from Cheshire, was the only Jewish student at his school. He experienced antisemitic bullying, including being told he should be in a gas chamber. "One single lesson about modern-day antisemitism really did help," he said. "Attitudes changed immediately and people did apologise to me. I experienced a lot less antisemitism. If it works in my school, there's no reason that it can't work in every school."

Beware the real curse of the mummy, say scientists

Kaya Burgess Science Correspondent

The growing trade in mummified human and animacl remains has been called the "real mummy's curse" by academics because of the health risks posed by dormant bacteria and fungi that can spring back to life.

For decades, there have been keen collectors of mummified body parts, with some tourists to sites such as the Capuchin Catacombs in Sicily even snapping off fingers or stealing whole hands as mementoes of their visits.

Today there is a market for the "semi-clandestine, often illicit, trade and sale of mummified remains" that mostly takes place via social media, websites and auction houses, warns a paper published in the International Journal of Cultural Property.

In many mummification processes throughout history, toxic heavy metals such as arsenic, mercury and lead were used to slow the decomposition of the bodies, and they can still pose a health danger to those handling the remains decades or centuries after they were embalmed.

"Most bacteria, fungi and yeasts survive, recolonise and multiply by using the body's available organic material, especially when remains have been manipulated and subjected to sub-optimal storage conditions. These can result in additional biological hazards to the living," the paper warns.

Academics examined 128 online posts offering remains. Some showed them out in the open, in living rooms and in homes with no evidence of temperature control. Postal workers who deliver the remains may also be at risk.

The inhalation of spores of *Aspergillus*, a form of mould, was implicated in the deaths of ten scientists who opened the tomb of King Casimir IV of Krakow in modern-day Poland in the 1970s, while spores of the same mould may have contributed to the death of Lord Carnarvon a year after the opening of Tutankhamun's tomb in Egypt in 1922.

At breakfast I've seen two sides of the celebrity life
Tom Whipple
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Comment

Arday shows we believe what we want to believe

From the Hitler diaries to a fake Rockefeller, it has always been easy to pull the wool over intelligent people's eyes

Daniel Finkelstein

@DANNYTHEFINK

He was savvy, seasoned, a man of experience and a rising star. In 2011 Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg had academic and business success in his past and, it seemed, political success in his future. The conservative defence minister in Angela Merkel's cabinet was a plausible candidate to be chancellor after Merkel and a certainty for continued high office. And then it all came crashing down.

A law professor engaged in a routine research project stumbled across anomalies in Guttenberg's 2006 doctoral thesis. Soon the whole edifice had collapsed. Not just the PhD, but the minister's reputation as an elite legal scholar and his political career. He had copied whole sections of his thesis from other work and pasted them into his own.

Once he had actually resigned it was instantly obvious that no other course was possible or right. Yet there was a period between revelation and resignation when departure from office was vigorously resisted. Not just by Guttenberg himself, but by conservative supporters, including media backers who tried their best to rally their readers to support this charismatic leader of the right. They claimed that it was a minor academic dispute and an irrelevance, distracting from urgent German security priorities. They yielded only when the evidence became too overwhelming to overcome.

The reason for raising this now is that there is something missing from the fuss about Jason Arday. And the Guttenberg scandal gives a clue about what that is.

Almost everything critical that has been written about Arday's behaviour, his academic career and his defenders has been correct. While plagiarism might have taken a moment or two to spot, his extraordinary claims about his life story certainly demanded a more sceptical eye than his employers and publishers ever cast upon them. And even if his scholarship had not been suspect, it is astonishing and dispiriting that work so obviously vacuous was regarded as having academic value. As the linguistics professor John McWhorter put it in the Manhattan Institute's City Journal, Arday became "a full professor of Cambridge based on doing interviews with acquaintances about the racism they experienced, and then largely just presenting what they said ... Arday was treated as

> Everyone involved so desperately wanted the diaries to be true

brilliant for his self-involved, unfocused, under-informed drivel."

When this work was exposed as not merely without merit but actually part of an elaborate fantasy, Arday found defenders inside and outside academe, led by the inevitable and ludicrous barrister Jolyon Maugham, forever seeking a fresh way to make a fool of himself. The offensive suggestion is that it was racist to point out Arday's numerous untruths.

And it is correct to observe that this defence, so obviously unmerited and undermined by the facts, was mounted because his defenders wanted him to be meritworthy and therefore concluded that he must be. They agreed so strongly with all his stuff about discrimination and decolonising the curriculum, and for all that he seemed to symbolise about overcoming disadvantages, that neither the thinness of his academic work nor out-and-out bad practice could get in the way.

So the Arday disaster has exposed to reasonable criticism his defenders and his employers and, indeed, everyone who took his unserious work seriously. Yet something is nevertheless missing from this criticism. It is that the mistake all these people have made is not confined to left-wing "DEI" liberal academics and activists. It is a near universal error, made by people of diverse professional backgrounds and political opinions.

If the Guttenberg example was not enough for you, consider that you are reading this article in a newspaper that once proclaimed the existence and validity of Hitler's diaries. These were in fact a sloppy forgery. In his hilarious and jaw-dropping book *Selling Hitler*, the journalist (and later novelist) Robert Harris tells the story of how one serious person after another, including a famous historian, came to believe, and publicly attest, that Hitler had written a diary which had resurfaced in the West after spending decades hidden in the East. The Times was among those who went along with something thoroughly unlikely, because everyone involved so desperately wanted it to be true.

The Hitler diaries made fraud victims out of some very hard-headed people. The ability to achieve that is what makes fraud such a common crime, leaving everybody except the victims baffled that anyone could have fallen for the trick. It is not necessary to be stupid to be taken in by fraud,

Ferdinand Waldo Demara Jr posed as a surgeon, prison warden and dean

indeed fraudsters often rely on the intelligence of their mark. They need someone with the intellectual ability to see the advantage of going along with a scheme that only later is revealed as fake.

The fantastically named Maria Konnikova was able to fill her book *The Confidence Game: Why We Fall for It ... Every Time* with examples of impostors ranging from Ferdinand Waldo Demara Jr, who posed as a naval surgeon, a civil engineer, a college dean and a prison warden, to Christian Gerhartsreiter, who presented himself for decades as Clark Rockefeller, a member of the wealthy dynasty, to the street artists who persuaded art experts that their fakes were real masterpieces.

Being vulnerable to fraud or to absurd claims or to trusting people who betray our trust is something we all think is true of other people but not of ourselves. Democrat leaders, for instance, shook their heads at how Republican voters overlooked Donald Trump's lies, while simultaneously asserting that Joe Biden was physically and mentally fit for a further term as president. I don't doubt that Nigel Farage views Cambridge University and its naivety with contempt. Meanwhile he was surprised one day at Chicago airport when his closest aide was suddenly arrested, facing charges of attempted extortion, money laundering, blackmail and fraud.

We are all, to a greater or lesser degree, trusting. If we were not, then social interaction would become hugely difficult. But we accompany this by a particular tendency to believe things that it is convenient for us to believe and people whose stories, ideas and offerings are most advantageous to us. We have a strong temptation to be taken in by things that are convenient to believe or to do.

One of the ironies of the Arday scandal is that he has become so famous precisely because his collapse is a glorious vindication of something many people already thought. They already thought that his sort of work was tendentious and that it found favour not on its merits but because advancing him showed his sponsors to be racially progressive. So the whole affair is profoundly satisfying for critics of liberal academia.

On this occasion the critics are right and what is now said about Arday is, in my view, fair and true. But the real lesson is that we are, all of us, vulnerable to being carried away by what's convenient even when we are not right. It's a lesson for universities and liberals, sure. But there's a message there for the rest of us too.

daniel.finkelstein@thetimes.co.uk

Meet the Writer: An evening with Ann Patchett & Meg Mason

The choices we make. The stories we tell to survive. The beauty of human connection. **Ann Patchett** and **Meg Mason** will join **Laura Hackett**, The Times and Sunday Times' deputy literary and fiction editor, to talk about their new novels and wider body of work. The evening will explore what it is to be a writer, which is, in many ways for these bestselling authors, what it is to be human.

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Comment

Who will keep Iceland safe: the US or Europe?

Reykjavik's dilemma matters to all of us given the growing threat of Russia in the High North

Roger Boyes

@ROGERBOYES

A strategically important island of 400,000 goes to the polls later this month to decide whether to resume talks with the European Union aimed at full membership. The referendum in Iceland should not be much of a nail-biter — it's already pretty "European", a member of the Schengen border agreement, inside the European Economic Area, and an early member of Nato, although it doesn't have a standing army. Yet pollsters give the government only a 50-50 chance of getting the vote through. Icelandic leaders are already pondering a second, definitive in/out referendum if a pushy Brussels demands too much in return for formal entry to their club.

If that sounds like a passing storm in a Viking drinking horn, think again. The Icelanders live on the geological faultline between Europe and America and regard themselves as both a founding European culture and as an embodiment of the American pioneering spirit. In the well-heeled times before the 2008 financial meltdown, which bankrupted the island, weekend shopping was often done in Manhattan. Icelandic oligarchs bought up chunks of American Airlines and Saks Fifth Avenue.

Now comes the formal choice: can Iceland continue to count on the security shield provided by the United States? Or would a deeper alignment with the EU be the safer option? A trading island must stay open to the world; there is no serious protectionist option, no prospect of autarky. To be a small state in an interlocked world is to be vulnerable at a time of crisis.

The crises informing this month's referendum stem from a collapse of trust in the solidity of the Trump presidency. The talk of annexing Greenland, a neighbour of both the US and Iceland, rattled Reykjavik. Greenland was still struggling with underfunded home rule from Denmark whereas Iceland had won full-on independence from Copenhagen in 1944. Even so the capacity of White House friends and family to eye up the place as a handy investment in mineral mining came as a shock.

> Russian spy ships have been spotted recently in waters off Iceland

How transactional would the security blanket become? How hard would Iceland have to flatter Washington to keep the relationship stable? As the pro-Europe lobby in Iceland, including the foreign minister Thorgerdur Katrin Gunnarsdottir, argued, a pre-Brussels alignment could at least create strength in numbers. Many EU countries had sent symbolic troop units to Greenland; French president Emmanuel Macron flew in. Would they do the same for Iceland if it rejected full-blooded membership? Would Macron even get out of bed? This is a dilemma that pre-dates Trump. When I was writing a book about Iceland and the financial crisis in 2008 I lived in the basement of our formidable Reykjavik stringer Hildur Helga Sigurdardottir and was holed up there for three days during a rare snowstorm. The reading matter on her shelves included a satirical novel by the Nobel prizewinner Halldor Laxness, written in the wake of the 1940s decision to station a US base in Keflavik as Iceland debated whether it should join Nato. His question: does hosting a foreign military guarantee national security, or does it surrender national sovereignty?

Next on the reading list was Einar Karason's *Devil's Island*, set in the Cold War in an abandoned Allied military barracks. It featured a clash between American consumerism and Icelandic national traditions and framed the question: does dependence on external military protection end up atomising society?

And then there was a pile of Iceland-noir thrillers which posed the problem: what happens if the future defence of the Arctic is negotiated over the heads of Icelanders, with no transparency or scrutiny? That's a debate, played out through various fictional plots, which centres on what happens when protection from an external power results in a loss of control and identity.

All these themes are still live-wired and part of the national discourse, not just in Iceland, not just in small states and not just in the immediate neighbourhood of an unpredictable superpower. And they become urgent when Arctic sea ice levels are dropping so drastically.

The Russian threat is real too. It's re-opening Soviet-era naval bases, deploying advanced air defence around Russian Arctic ports, expanding the Northern Fleet on the Kola peninsula. Russian spy ships have been spotted recently in waters off Iceland, submarines are finding paths through the North Atlantic, and there is an obvious Russian interest in disrupting fibre-optic data cables across the Atlantic as well as between new Nato members Finland and Sweden.

There is thus a natural interest for both the US and Europe to persuade Iceland to be more than a passive observer of another potential 21st-century maritime battlefield. Finland for example is building part of a fleet of ice-breakers designed for use by the US navy in the Arctic. Iceland does not have that heavy-duty military shipbuilding capacity; it has a coast guard that once tried to scare off British vessels in the 1970s Cod War but which, with US or European help, could be modernised into a potent anti-submarine detection force.

The political context has to be established first, however. The European Commission and its political leaders are nervous about scaring the Icelandic voters into a negative vote. They seem to think it wiser to vaguely promise future concessions on fish quotas rather than go up against Trump or tread in murky geopolitical waters. They're wrong. Sub-Arctic Iceland knows what's going on in the High North and rightly wants a straight answer from Europe and the US: who will help us stay safe?

THUNDERER

Israel wants peace but Hamas must disarm completely

Jonathan Conricus

The Board of Peace's plan for Gaza offers a rare glimmer of hope amid years of bloodshed and despair. At its core is a straightforward proposition: the phased disarmament of Hamas and other Palestinian terror organisations in exchange for the eventual withdrawal of Israeli forces. Israelis and Gazans alike desperately want Hamas's weapons taken away, Gaza demilitarised and a new form of leadership to take root — one based on respectful coexistence rather than endless jihad.

Many Israelis, still reeling from the horrors of October 7, see this as the only reliable way to restore security to the kibbutzim and towns that face Gaza. They have no appetite for indefinite military operations. Popular rhetoric aside, neither the Israeli public nor the military wants to remain in Gaza indefinitely.

What they want is simple: the absence of a genocidal terror organisation on the other side of the fence, armed with rockets, tunnels and an ideology of annihilation. Gazans, too, have every reason to support this. Years of rule by a mafia that prioritises tunnels and rockets over schools, hospitals and prosperity have exacted a terrible toll.

Yet history teaches caution. Hamas has a well-documented record of tactical pauses. The Islamic concept of *hudna*, a temporary cessation of hostilities, has been invoked when jihadi forces find themselves at a disadvantage, only to be broken once strength is regained. If the current peace deal amounts to nothing more than another *hudna*, it will fail. What is required instead is genuine, complete disarmament: every long-range rocket, every AK-47, maps of the entire tunnel network and the locations of weapons manufacturing sites, all handed over under independent international verification.

Israel's actions will hinge entirely on whether that verification occurs. The absence of an immediate official Israeli endorsement is understandable in the present political climate. With elections approaching, any government is wary of appearing to accept international dictates that place civilians at risk. But once the Strip is verifiably demilitarised, Israel has every incentive to withdraw.

Palestinians in Gaza possess agency. They can choose prosperity, dignity and coexistence instead of the ideology that has repeatedly invited destruction. That choice begins with the surrender of the weapons that make peaceful politics impossible.

The responsibility now rests with those who hold the guns: hand them over, allow the process to be verified and let the possibility of coexistence finally take root. Anything less returns everyone to the same deadly cycle that has already claimed too many lives.

Jonathan Conricus was international spokesperson of the IDF, 2017-2021

Tom Whipple Notebook

At breakfast I've seen two sides of the celebrity life

When I think of fame, of what it is to be recognised in the street — approached by strangers as if they are your friend, aware that your smallest forgotten interaction will be their forever dinner party anecdote — I think of two hotel breakfast buffets. One was a couple of weeks ago. The other, the first, a decade ago.

What I remember, now, when the famousish lady came down to breakfast, was her headwear. People don't normally wear trilbys at 8am in February in the dining room of a Welsh hotel. I ignored her and returned to my toast.

But the trilby was not meant to be ignored. Its owner sat at her table and angled her chair to point in to the room. Then she waited. Over the next five minutes she smiled seraphically at the normals like me, drinking our normal coffee in peace. Somehow she changed the dynamic, so it seemed impolite to ignore her. Until, the awkwardness too great, the poor man beside me cracked. "Aren't you the singer from...?" he asked.

And with that the breakfast peace was shattered — she was the queen, the whole room was her court. We heard every anecdote, polished and re-polished over the years. They were good anecdotes. It still felt a little odd. Despite 20 years of fame, she could not go unacknowledged. Even at breakfast.

Eating eggs in peace

The second breakfast was this summer. I had been chairing a talk with someone of definite A-list fame. Walking back to the hotel, I gained the slightest insight into what that meant. People approached for selfies. They tried to connect by citing tenuous links, vaguely shared acquaintances. No, he said politely, he couldn't remember that person. Yes, he said, he would pose for a photo. Everyone meant well. No one was aggressive. But collectively, aggressive was how it felt.

The next morning, we had breakfast together and it was still going. Periodically, someone would move in for a croissant, spot him, and tell him how much they liked him. He was never less than meticulously polite, never anything other than pretty obviously awkward. He must have had this for 40 years. It felt like he still hadn't figured out how to make this situation work. He just wanted to have his eggs Benedict in peace. He was, in other words, a normal person.

I won't name him, because I suspect he wouldn't want me to. And I won't name the singer, because I suspect she might.

When will I expire?

It is time for a new passport. Getting a new one has been very satisfying — I am far from the first to note that this is a bit of the state that works very well. Efficient, easy, does what it says. Whoever runs it should be shifted to the NHS or civil service procurement. Or maybe the nuclear deterrent.

Even so, I'm sorry to see the old passport go. Its pages record, in comfortingly bureaucratic fashion, a decade of adventures. I remember when I got it, how 2026 seemed unimaginably far away. Now look at all I've done. And despite those adventures I look, I deludedly think, not that different from the man in the 2016 photograph.

But now I have my new passport, and a new expiry date. This time, it is 2036 that seems unimaginably far away — even though 2016 feels like yesterday. I guess, if I'm lucky, before I die I'll experience that befuddlement about expiry dates versus issue dates three more times. It's difficult not to feel a little morbid. Three passport renewals until my own expiry date. Still, at least the website works.

Happiness is up to us

During the 2008 financial crash, there was a comment beneath a news article that I remember to this day but have never found again. So I will paraphrase. It said: "Everyone keeps talking about how this could be like the 1970s. But I remember the 1970s. I lived by the sea, and I walked my toddler on the beach every day. The 1970s were great."

I think about that comment a lot. Of course the national picture — economy, politics, geopolitics — matters. But most of our happiness is in our own hands.

Matthew Parris is away

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Police misogyny left Simon Levy free to kill

Clear signs that serial attacker would rape and murder were ignored, despite lessons from death of Sarah Everard

Sonia Sodha

@SONIASODHA

Reading about Simon Levy, one quickly loses count of the number of police failures that allowed him to escalate from perpetrating sexual assaults on the Tube to murdering two women. We are now more than five years on from the murder of Sarah Everard by the Met officer Wayne Couzens, a man who had already been reported multiple times to the police for indecent exposure, and whose red flags led colleagues to nickname him "the rapist". This case prompts the question: how much has actually changed?

Levy was first reported to the police for sexual assault in 2017 but it took two more assaults for him to be sent to prison in 2021. Less than a year into his sentence he assaulted a female prison officer but, despite there being video and her reporting it the same day, the Met did not interview him for another year, and only after he was released from prison on licence after serving just half his sentence.

Months after he was released, he assaulted a woman on the Tube, but was not identified by the British Transport Police until two years later. This was followed by a rape allegation, which led to him being returned to prison for just three months until the end of his sentence. On his release, the Met took the extraordinary decision to downgrade him from a high to a medium-risk sex offender.

He went on to commit several further sexual assaults, then the violent rape of a vulnerable woman in early 2025 that was barely followed up by the police. He brutally murdered Carmenza Valencia-Trujillo and Sheryl Wilkins that same year. In between these murders, he committed further sexual assaults on public transport and was granted bail each time, despite having previously breached his conditions.

Not all gropers become murderers but men like Levy and Couzens invariably commit lesser assaults before progressing to rape and murder. Save knocking on the door of a station and giving himself up, Levy could not have made it more obvious what a risk he posed. Yet time and again, the police failed to treat his offending with the appropriate gravity, allowing him to move from assault to rape to murder unimpeded by law enforcement.

Levy serves as a reminder of just how bad the police and probation services can be at keeping track of dangerous men, at the very moment the government is proposing the early release of hundreds of domestic abusers into the community because of a shortage of prison places. And his crimes are not the only symptom of police failures to grip the institutional problems revealed by Everard's murder.

At the end of last year, the Centre for Women's Justice submitted a super-complaint about the long delays in investigating sexual offences: there were almost 14,000 investigations that had been open for more than three years, and over 1,700 for more than seven years. That is clearly terrible for the victims but also means it is likely that the next Levy is being left out there to terrorise women.

> Too many officers look away from domestic abusers in their ranks

This institutionally lax approach continues to be underpinned not just by misogynistic attitudes in the police but cultures in which police officers look the other way from — or even cover for — domestic abusers within their own ranks. Some officers who stand accused of domestic abuse have been promoted to take on responsibility for policing rape and domestic abuse; female officers who report their male police partners for abuse have faced victimisation for doing so.

A career in policing attracts not only decent citizens who wish to serve but bad men who get a thrill out of domination and force: the kind of men who may not only minimise violence against women but perpetrate it themselves. This makes both vetting and encouraging fellow officers to flag worrying behaviour vital. Yet research by Refuge highlights that in 2022-23 just a quarter of police officers and staff accused of violence against women were suspended from duty pending the outcome of an investigation. It recently took an undercover investigation by BBC *Panorama* to uncover gross misogyny and racism by police officers at Charing Cross police station that had been left to flourish unchecked.

The mind boggles at how starkly this contrasts with the way Northumbria police have pursued Rachel Fletcher, a detective constable who handled difficult and complex investigations into male offenders, including a prolific child sex offender. Fletcher was last week summarily dismissed by a gross misconduct panel after fellow officers alleged she commented that "all men are rapists" and referred to men who identify as female as "cocks in frocks".

She denies both; she says she actually made the accurate comment "all rapists are men", joked about imposing a curfew on men to prevent rape, and complained about an unlawful and since-revised national police policy — developed by her force's chief constable — that female officers should strip-search men who claim to be female. Fletcher quite credibly believes she has been punished for not falling in line with a misogynistic policy, and finds herself on the same banned policing list as Wayne Couzens. She will be challenging her dismissal in the courts.

I find it extraordinary that the police could be so ruthlessly efficient at ejecting an experienced female officer who has helped bring sex offenders to justice, and over a handful of disputed comments at work, when they have such a dreadful track record of rooting out men who abuse women from within their own ranks, and continue to make the devastating errors that allow violent offenders like Levy to rape and murder. It hints at a culture in which alleged offensive remarks about men are treated on a different scale to real violence against women, and suggests the police have a long way to go yet in addressing their institutionalised misogyny.

Alice Thomson is away

Letters to the Editor

Letters to the Editor should be sent to letters@thetimes.co.uk or by post to 1 London Bridge Street, London SE1 9GF

Subscriptions plea

Sir, The prime minister's pledge to crack down on bad actors who mislead consumers is absolutely right but rushing ahead with a subscriptions regime without proper consultation with responsible businesses — which were never the intended targets of the new system — risks undermining this objective ("PM sets sights on 'rip-off' discounts and subscriptions", Aug 10). If responsible businesses are not given the proper time to prepare, as they were repeatedly promised, it will ultimately be to the detriment of the many millions of consumers who enjoy and rely upon the services and products these companies provide. The Competition and Markets Authority has successfully used an adjustment period to support businesses with compliance efforts for similar changes to consumer law. This must now be set out as a matter of urgency.
Theo Bamber, CEO, News Media Association; **Matthew Evans**, chief operating officer and director of markets, techUK; **Sajeeda Merali**, CEO, Professional Publishers Association; **Simon Newman**, CEO, Online Dating and Discovery Association

Airports rail link

Sir, Gatwick will have its second runway in a few years' time (letter, Aug 11), and Heathrow will eventually have its third. Both have good rail links into central London. But what if you need to transfer between them? There was a visionary proposal about 15 years ago for a high-speed rail link (known as Heathwick) that would have connected Heathrow and Gatwick, allowing them to function in effect as a single hub. The journey time between them would have been about 15 minutes. Unless any thought is being given to reviving the idea, it seems that driving, with a journey time of an hour or more, will remain the only realistic transport option between the two airports.
David Pennie
Cottingham, E Yorks

Sir, We are accustomed to paying for flights at the time of booking, often months in advance. However, your report about the additional charge to help finance the new runway at Heathrow takes advance to a whole new level ("Heathrow in bid for £9bn runway funds", Aug 10): payment toward flights I haven't yet booked on a runway that doesn't yet exist.
Andrew Watts
Great Munden, Herts

Corrections and clarifications

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Legal struggle over early release of PC's killers

Sir, Further to your report "Burnham demands plan to keep PC's killers in jail" (Aug 11), prisoners released on licence are not released "early". The release of prisoners on licence is a feature of criminal sentencing and is designed to balance punishment behind bars with community rehabilitation to reduce reoffending. If the government is serious about dealing with overcrowding in prisons, it must address the safe release of thousands of prisoners on (now unlawful) indefinite sentences, who have served their sentence many times already. It was also recently revealed that the number of prisoners recalled to prison now exceeds the number of prisoners released from prison.

Perhaps the lord chancellor could direct his energies towards these systemic problems rather than finding elaborate ruses to keep two particular prisoners at their present address.
Oliver Pateman
Barrister, 5 Paper Buildings, Temple

Sir, John Young (letter, Aug 10) seems to believe that all cases of murder or manslaughter are the same and that an outcry of public opinion should not sway decisions regarding early release of those convicted of these crimes. While any criminal offence involving the death of another human being is despicable, there are different repercussions for society in cases involving first-responders. Police officers, firefighters and ambulance workers run towards danger on our behalf. Their unlawful killing is different to that of the ordinary citizen, for they serve us. If we expect them to protect us we must have a serious deterrent to stop as many killings of our protectors as possible.
Dr Michael Fopp
Soulbury, Bucks

Sir, It beggars belief that prisoners convicted of homicide offences such as manslaughter or causing death by dangerous driving are to be released even earlier than it was anticipated that they would have been at the point of sentence. Not a single minister rolled out for interview has been able to identify the number of such prisoners who are going to be released. Are our prisons really so full that such killers have to be released so early?
Brian O'Neill KC
2 Hare Court, Temple

Sir, The prime minister says he is increasingly confident that a solution will be found to prevent the early release of Jessie Cole and Albert Bowers, even if one does not appear to have occurred to him yet. Surely one option is to prevent their early release on the grounds that given the public outrage that greeted the news, their being set free would constitute a threat to public order and their safety on the outside could not be guaranteed. As I recall, it was an argument mounted when Myra Hindley started her campaign for parole.
APM Rees
Caerphilly

Sir, Although Cole and Bowers may not deserve early release (a view shared by 900,000-plus petitioners), the demerits of the other 5,000 prisoners required to be released to enable the prison system to "function" have not been put to that cohort of the public. Given that the prime minister is keen to be swayed by public opinion (and as such can be labelled populist), perhaps the BBC could be persuaded to have a phone-in show whereby viewers could vote on each of the prisoners, with Burnham having a casting vote in the event of a tie.
Tony Dzimitrowicz
Croydon

Role of 20mph limit in reducing injuries

Sir, It is difficult not to feel sympathy for your correspondent (Aug 11) whose family members driving at 22mph and 23mph led to a £500 increase in her car insurance premium. However, speed is a major factor in child pedestrian casualties and anyone working in accident and emergency departments or trauma services will have much worse stories. The risk of serious injury or being killed is 45 per cent if a pedestrian is hit at 30mph compared with 5 per cent at 20mph.

Until all vehicles are fitted with autonomous emergency braking we should perhaps adopt the policy of Graz in Austria, where 30km/h (18mph) is the default speed limit in 80 per cent of residential areas, removing the feeble excuse of drivers being "confused" by changes of speed limit from one area to the next.
Dr Richard Cole FRCS
Salisbury

Sir, Libby Purves (Aug 10) singles out the "hooligan in a Jag". I drive a Jag but keep religiously to 20mph where that is the speed limit. I have such a limit on my own street and the main road that it joins; my Jag happily cruises at such a speed. As a child I was hit by a speeding car in a built-up area. I now struggle to walk, and after 47 years still have nightmares about it.
Jennifer Sivewright
Wakefield, W Yorks

Sir, Like Libby Purves, I have been on three speed awareness courses. Oddly, none has raised the extraordinary initial rate of acceleration of modern cars, especially electric ones. Car makers always quote the 0-60mph time as a measure of performance but the 0-30mph time is more significant. When you pull away from traffic lights a 20mph or 30mph speed limit can easily be exceeded within seconds.
John Ashton
Glemsford, Suffolk

Sir, Ask any casualty staff member whether they would rather be struck by a vehicle travelling at 20mph or 30mph. Cars are getting heavier and safer for those inside, at the expense of those outside.
Tom Dehn (ret'd surgeon)
Stratfield Mortimer, Berks

Identity politics

Sir, Although I agree with Giles Coren (Notebook, Aug 11) that it is about time we stopped talking about Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor, I don't think the same applies to Jason Arday. As Nigel Biggar argues in his Thunderer (Aug 11), this affair has raised important questions about identity politics in our universities. These questions are worth debating.
John Newton
Thirsk, N Yorks

Sound odyssey

Sir, I commiserate with Tim Yeo (letter, Aug 11). My advice to friends contemplating going to see *The Odyssey*, particularly Imax screenings, is to wear an eye mask for the gory bits and ear plugs for the horribly loud, discordant soundtrack. It's quite a good film otherwise.
Gilly Hendry
Gullane, East Lothian

Letters to The Times must be exclusive and may be edited

ALLEGED TRAFFIC IN COCAINE

FROM THE TIMES AUGUST 12, 1926

Benjamin White, 43, appeared on remand at Marlborough-street Police Court, charged with being in unauthorized possession of cocaine at Denmark-street. Further charges were made against him in relation to two opium pipes and a quantity of morphine, alleged to have been found at his lodgings.

A detective stated that he saw a woman pass a Treasury note to the prisoner, who, putting it in his pocket, took something out and gave it to the woman. The detective stopped them and seized the woman by the wrist. She opened her hand, and the witness took possession of a paper packet containing a white powder. The woman told him that White had just given it to her for 10s. The prisoner replied that he did not know the woman and had not given her anything. The prisoner dropped a match-box, which contained a white powder similar to the other. The witness searched the prisoner at the police station, and in his pocket he found a 10s note and in his wallet another 10s note. He went to the prisoner's address at Cambridge-terrace and found match-boxes similar to that dropped by him.

A detective-inspector from New Scotland-yard stated that after the arrest of the accused he went to his address. In a locked chest of drawers he found three cardboard boxes containing 22 tubes labelled "Morphine hydrochlor" and a large number of empty phials, similarly labelled. In a room leading out of the bedroom he found two opium pipes, wrapped in a pair of pyjamas. There was also a tin containing a black substance which resembled opium, and two opium needles.

Among the property found in the prisoner's room were bank receipts for two sealed parcels. On July 29 he went to the bank and was handed two parcels to which the receipts referred. They were opened in the presence of the prisoner.

Evidence was given by a Government analyst that the contents of two paper packets which he had analysed were composed of 50 per cent cocaine. He had also, he said, analysed three boxes of tubes of white tablets. The tablets contained morphine hydrochloride.

The prisoner, who pleaded "Not Guilty", was remanded, bail being granted in his own recognizances of £1,000 and a surety of £100.

THETIMES.COM/ARCHIVE

Water of strife

Sir, As I read in your columns that Thames Water has given its chief financial officer a million-pound "sign-on" payment (Aug 11), the following should be recorded. For the past 48 hours, opposite my house, fresh water has been gushing out into the street and is now flowing into the gutter in two streams. Some nearby builders and I sent an urgent complaint to Thames Water (this itself seemed an unbelievably complicated process). Net result: nothing. As I write, it is still gushing. In the meantime my plants are withering.

How long, O Lord, how long?
Robin Baird-Smith
London NW3

Medical hoax

Sir, Late in her long career as a GP my wife was presented with a coffee mug on which was emblazoned: "Please do not confuse your Google search with my medical degree."

Perhaps President Trump and Robert F Kennedy Jr might benefit from receiving the same ("Trump signs order to limit child vaccines over unproven autism link", Aug 10).
Andrew Colman
London E11

Convertible crime

Sir, You give various reasons for the decline in popularity of convertible cars but omit to mention the most obvious one: that soft tops are likely to be slashed by thieves and vandals ("Sunset for the soft-top? Driveways fill with SUVs", news, Aug 10). I know this to my cost from two such experiences and now drive a boring but much safer saloon car with a reassuringly solid roof.
Gillian Nathan
Shenley, Herts

Supporting the arts

Sir, The Royal Ballet and Opera has announced that it needs £60 million to stay open ("Cash-hit venue warns of frights at the opera unless building upgraded", Aug 2). How is it that our museums and galleries are able to remain free for all and yet there is not enough money in the coffers for the performing arts? Perhaps there should be a special Performing Arts Fund akin to the Art Fund.
Tristan Hambleton
Singer; London SE23

Rich Welsh genre

Sir, I trust there is room in the Welsh retitled movie market (letters, Aug 6-8, 10 & 11) for *Dai of the Triffids*.
Nigel Dando
Portishead, Somerset

Sir, For the biblically minded *The Tenby Commandments*, for lovers of espionage *The Idris File* and for romantics *When Barry Met Pwllheli*.
Mary Robey
London N7

Sir, *Chitty Chitty Bangor*?
Andrea Tate
Goring on Thames, Oxon

Much-loved dog

Sir, My father-in-law, who was Dutch, said that in the next life he would want above all else to be an Englishman's dog (letters, Aug 10 & 11).
Edward Woods
Towcester, Northants

Daily Universal Register

Cook Islands: General election is held.
Norway: The half-year results of the sovereign wealth fund are announced.
World: UN's International Youth Day.

Nature notes

As the drought crushed the life out of North Yorkshire, even deep-rooted meadow plants began to wilt. Ditches, streams, rivers, tarns and bogs became oases. In the village of Balk, where its eponymous beck purls through soft mud, great willowherb still managed to thrive, forming thick stands over two metres tall. The wild bees gratefully accepted the pollen and nectar; elephant hawk-moths visited the plant after dark — the foliage feeds their caterpillars. Great willowherb is one of the signature plants of summer. In *The Wind in the Willows*, it takes centre stage when Mole and Ratty look back on their summer together. The flowers are recalled as "tender and wistful, like a pink sunset cloud". JONATHAN TULLOCH

Birthdays today

Mark Knopfler, *pictured*, singer-songwriter, Dire Straits, *Romeo and Juliet* (1981), *Walk of Life* (1985), 77; **Casey Affleck**, actor, *Manchester by the Sea* (2016), *Oppenheimer* (2024), 51; **Michael Brunson**, broadcaster, political editor, ITN (1986-2000), 86; **Cara Delevingne**, model and actress, *Paper Towns* (2015), *Valerian and the City of a Thousand Planets* (2017), *Carnival Row* (2019-23), 34; **Arthur Edwards**, The Sun royal photographer (since 1977), 86; **Sir Bradley Fried**, financier, chairman, Partners Capital (investment firm), Goldman Sachs International and Goldman Sachs International Bank (2023-24), chairman of the Court of the Bank of England (2018-22), 61; **Tyson Fury**, boxer, former multiple world heavyweight champion, 38; **George Hamilton**, actor, *Zorro: The Gay Blade* (1981), *The Godfather: Part III* (1990), 87; **François Hollande**, president of France (2012-17), 72; **Sam J Jones**, actor best known for starring in *Flash Gordon* (1980), 72; **Prof Sir David King**, founder and chairman (2019-23), Centre for Climate Repair, University of Cambridge, UK special representative on climate change (2013-17), UK government's chief scientific adviser (2000-07), 87; **David Lee**, jazz pianist and composer, arranger for stars including Norman Wisdom and Judy Garland, 100; **Michael Leiters**, chief executive, Porsche AG, 55; **Ron Mael**, musician, Sparks, *This Town Ain't Big Enough for Both of Us* (1974), *Beat the Clock* (1979), 81; **Amanda Redman**, actress, *At Home with the Braithwaites* (2000-03), *New Tricks* (2003-13), 69; **Pete Sampras**, tennis player, seven-time Wimbledon men's singles champion, 55; **George Soros**, founder (1970), Soros Fund Management, 96; **Tanita Tikaram**, singer-songwriter, *Twist in My Sobriety* (1988), 57; **Sir Graham Wylie**, co-founder of Sage software group and founder of Technology Services Group, 67.

On this day

In **1908** Henry Ford's first Model T came off a moving assembly line, priced at $850.

The last word

"The great maxim of modern thought is not only the toleration of everything, but the examination of everything. It is by examining very bare, very dull, very unpromising things, that science has come to be what it is." Walter Bagehot, *The English Constitution* (1894)

Just Do It

Andy Burnham has wielded the power of his office to stop the killers of PC Harper being released. He must bring the same zeal to tackling illegal migration

Ministers decide. That simple truth is the cornerstone of the British constitution, but in recent years it has been wilfully forgotten. Sir Keir Starmer was a model of passivity, and his Conservative predecessors were little better — tying their own hands with the strictures of unaccountable quangos and surrendering power to faceless officials.

Andy Burnham therefore deserves some credit. This week has shown that he understands the authority of his office. Sir Keir repeatedly agreed to the early release of prisoners, including some convicted of heinous offences, after officials told him there was no alternative. Recognising the public's moral outrage as urgent and legitimate, his successor pushed civil servants to find a way of exempting rapists, serious child sex offenders and groomers from release. Mr Burnham appears to have succeeded in this endeavour, but, by his own admission, has not gone far enough.

There has been continued outcry in recent days over the killers convicted of PC Andrew Harper's brutal and senseless manslaughter in 2019, two of whom are eligible for early release next year. Asked by The Times if the prime minister would intervene to keep them detained, Downing Street's answer was unequivocal: he will. Mr Burnham faces the same grim choices as his predecessor, but refuses to accept that better solutions are impossible. He believes that to govern in difficult times need not mean declaring oneself incapable.

Of course, Mr Burnham might yet fall short of his promises. But it is refreshing to see him resist the pernicious defeatism and learnt helplessness that has too often passed for statecraft in recent years. He has shown that it is still possible for a government to exercise agency when confronted with controversy or challenge. Ministers do decide, and Mr Burnham has decided to respond to justified fury rather than ignore it. He should maintain this approach in other fights to come.

If the prime minister is to prove he is doing politics differently, then he must grip the Home Office with the zeal with which he has confronted the Ministry of Justice. There is no worse indictment of what Mr Burnham lambasts as the "unaccountable state" than the crisis of illegal migration. He was right to keep Shabana Mahmood, who understands that strong borders are existential for a functional state, as home secretary.

Small boat crossings are significantly down on last year. But good intentions and incremental improvements, however welcome, are not enough. Mr Burnham knows it. Of those reduced numbers, he said yesterday: "That's not good enough. People will say to me they don't want any crossings." He is right. Voters tell pollsters that migration is still the problem that most concerns them. Nor, in the modern attention economy, are promising statistics any rejoinder to images of 70,000 migrants storming the shores of Ceuta last month, or 230 crossing the English Channel on a "mega-dinghy" this week.

Mr Burnham noted that his own constituents want action. He pledged to "change the conversation" on illegal immigration, along with relentless action to change the "tactics" of Britain's response to the crisis. But what the prime minister needs is a bold new strategy. In his industrious response to early prison releases, he has given voters reason to believe he means what he says.

The prime minister should refuse to take no for an answer on illegal migration. Britain needs serious deterrents — including overseas return hubs such as the Falkland Islands for unauthorised arrivals — and a crackdown on the perverse welfare incentives that sustain the deadly traffic of small boats across the Channel. The window of opportunity is open. YouGov's latest survey reports that Labour is just ahead of Reform UK. Mr Burnham cannot afford to squander that tentative public trust, nor his chance to fix Britain's open borders.

Election Charade

The only party officially opposed to the Ukraine war has been banned in Russia

There is now no legal way for Russians to express opposition to the war in Ukraine at the ballot box. This week, in response to a trumped-up objection by a small, servile pro-Putin party, Russia's Supreme Court banned the Yabloko party from contesting parliamentary elections next month. Yabloko, a liberal party founded in Boris Yeltsin's time and still able to channel limited opposition to President Putin despite repeated harassment, has called for an end to the fighting. Some 40 party activists are facing prosecution and its deputy leader is serving seven years in prison. Police threatened those protesting outside the court with swift removal to military recruitment centres.

Mr Putin originally allowed Yabloko to run in an attempt to give the Duma elections some credibility. He has since become concerned by the muted but growing anti-war sentiment and the damage to public morale caused by Ukraine's increasingly effective attacks on barracks, refineries, distribution centres and key economic targets. Mr Putin's popularity ratings have fallen to 66 per cent — the lowest since the start of the war (though, according to experts, still far higher than the true measure of his popularity). In the belief that his presence can reassure voters, yesterday he flew to Novosibirsk, the biggest city in Siberia and the sixth big city he has visited in under three weeks. And in an almost farcical re-enactment of the Potemkin deceptions, the local authorities in two other Siberian cities, Irkutsk and Krasnoyarsk, lowered petrol prices during his visits — and raised them again on his departure.

Mr Putin's trips may also be intended to bolster his own morale. Russia's standing is under siege. Its global influence has been severely reduced in the Middle East after the fall of Syria's President Assad, and in Africa after former Wagner group mercenaries failed to solidify their ousting of the French in the Sahel. At home, its economy is suffering from the switch of all investment to the military, leaving the civilian economy struggling, prices rising and vital high-tech sectors languishing. Many of the best brains have decided to emigrate.

There is no doubt that United Russia, the ruling party that dominates the spineless Duma, will win. But the election campaign still matters. It is a barometer of public opinion and the only time that officials are obliged to listen to complaints about local living conditions. Though no party can question the war itself, its effects are beginning to hurt: fuel shortages have led to queues at the pumps, the Black Sea and Crimean resorts are becoming dangerous for those used to summer holidays on the beaches, and the increasingly desperate attempts to recruit enough soldiers are distorting lives. Above all, no official propaganda can hide the losses — some half a million dead, according to western intelligence sources — along with rising bribery, corruption and brutal conditions.

The 450-seat Duma, in which five parties are represented, has, like all the Putin dictatorship, a veneer of legality. The absolute majority is held by United Russia, Mr Putin's party. The new parliament is due to sit until 2031, a year after the end of Mr Putin's current presidential term. It could therefore play a key role if he leaves office then. Already Mr Putin has sidelined Dmitry Medvedev, the hardline former president, by denying him former top status in the party list. More such manoeuvrings are likely. Little wonder Mr Putin is taking this election charade seriously.

Building Beautiful

Garish shopfronts make high streets less compelling to visit

In one of his most famous sentiments, the conservative philosopher Sir Roger Scruton said: "Like the pleasure of friendship, the pleasure in beauty is curious: it aims to understand its object, and to value what it finds." It is this quote that adorns "Living with Beauty", the concluding report from a 2020 government commission that was his final work. Sir Roger urged the government to see beauty as an essential condition, not an option, for planning permission; to refuse ugliness that destroyed any sense of place; and to promote greater stewardship of the natural and built environment. All of these are wise principles.

Labour has previously shown little interest in the appreciation of beauty. The Office for Place, which was set up after Sir Roger's report to champion better building design across the country, was unwisely closed two years ago. Andy Burnham, however, has hinted that he appreciates the importance of having high streets people want to visit. The prime minister has announced a clampdown on garish vape and fast food shops. His government will work with councils and the Planning Advisory Service to issue stricter guidance on the design and appearance of shopfronts. Such small changes can make all the difference.

An example of success can be found in Lichfield in Staffordshire, where the district council published a design code in May for shopfronts with a greater sense of quality and prosperity. Better shops alone will not rescue ailing high streets; councils must also provide targeted funding to individual businesses as well as doing their bit to enhance the public realm. But curtailing vulgar fronts is a precursor to vibrancy. We hope Mr Burnham will further discover the importance of beauty in building and pride in place. As Sir Roger's commission rightly argued, this is the only way to make places more livable.

World

Fallout from war drives Putin out to meet his people

Russia
Marc Bennetts

President Putin talking to students and young scientists during his visit to Novosibirsk yesterday

Novosibirsk, the largest city in Siberia, has not looked so good for a long time. Roads have been resurfaced, pavements repaired and grass trimmed.

Work was finished frantically before President Putin's visit yesterday. "They're practically rebuilding the city in three days," a resident said on social media. "Damn, I wish he'd visit more often, maybe then we'd see a whole new city built in a year."

The Russian leader rarely left Moscow at the start of the year, possibly for fear of assassination, but he has visited six cities in less than three weeks. Analysts say he may be making an effort to boost his declining popularity.

Putin's approval ratings fell in July to 66 per cent, a historic low since the start of the war in Ukraine in 2022, according to FOM, a Kremlin-affiliated pollster. Critics said his true support was lower.

The war is hitting home in Russia. Ukrainian drone and missile attacks have caused fuel shortages, internet blackouts and deaths. During Putin's recent visits to Irkutsk and Krasnoyarsk, petrol prices were reduced — apparently on official orders — before rising again as soon as he left.

Although elections are rigged in favour of Putin and his ruling party, and the security services stamp out signs of dissent, the Kremlin is known to monitor public opinion. Putin's ratings are high in comparison with those of western leaders, but the national media is controlled by the Kremlin.

Farida Rustamova, an exiled opposition journalist who runs Vlast, an English-language website about Russian domestic politics, said: "For a long time now, [Putin's] own approval rating has been the primary indicator of the state of affairs in the country for him.

"It is unlikely he is overly concerned about his personal standing at this very moment, yet the system is so fixated on him as an individual that he is compelled to keep it running at peak performance. He genuinely believes that his public appearances reassure people. It's long been proven [by opinion polls] that they don't, but he believes it."

Less than 24 hours before Putin's trip to Novosibirsk, the Supreme Court barred Yabloko, Russia's oldest surviving liberal party, from next month's parliamentary elections. Only days earlier, Yabloko had been allowed on to ballots by a Kremlin-loyal committee.

Police told a group of Yabloko supporters outside the Supreme Court that they would be taken to military enlistment centres unless they dispersed, according to a video on social media.

The rapid U-turn suggests that Putin is unsure about the level of public support for the war, according to Mikhail Fishman, a Russian opposition journalist and author.

"Someone got through to Putin," Fishman wrote in an article published by TV Rain, an opposition media outlet outlawed by Moscow. "It was likely someone from the FSB [security service]; it is hard to imagine who else it could have been. Putin gave the nod and Yabloko was removed."

He said it was difficult to think that Yabloko could have appeared on the ballot without approval from Putin. "This indicates that the system is in a state of severe internal discord ... where, on one hand, Putin is convinced that everything is fine and that everyone supports him and his war, while on the other, he is not so sure."

Mikhail Khodorkovsky, a Kremlin critic who was once Russia's richest man, argues that Putin has a problem. "If his ratings go down, he has to rely more on the FSB [to tackle dissent]," Khodorkovsky told The Times. "But the FSB are not Putin's people. They consider him a weakling. And if he is forced to rely on them too much, they will happily start treating him like a puppet. And Putin understands this perfectly."

Mute but growing anti-war sentiment is alarming Putin, leading article, page 25

Ex-marine freed from Russian jail

Marc Bennetts

A former American marine who was in prison in Russia has been released by Moscow on humanitarian grounds after claims that he was close to death, President Trump said yesterday.

Robert Gilman was arrested after allegedly kicking a police officer during a disturbance on a train shortly before Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022. His father, who emigrated from Russia to the US, said that the incident took place when Gilman, 32, fell ill and accidentally struck the officer. The officer was not hurt and dropped charges but Gilman was sentenced to four and a half years in prison.

Gilman was later given an extra ten years for allegedly attacking prison staff, Russian media reported. He was one of ten US citizens known to be behind bars in Russia.

"After my discussions with President Vladimir Putin, Russia has agreed to release him, very much on a Humanitarian Basis. We appreciate this decision, and the fact that Russia asked for no one in return," Trump wrote on social media. He said that Gilman was being accompanied on a plane to Washington by his family and US officials.

US-based advocacy groups that supported Gilman and his family said that he had been subject to extremely harsh treatment while in prison in Voronezh, a city 340 miles from Moscow. Lexie Hudson, Gilman's sister, said last week that she feared for his life.

Eric Lebson of Global Reach, a group that helps Americans who are wrongfully detained abroad, told Reuters last week that Gilman had been tortured and injected with mind-altering drugs by prison guards. He said that Gilman was moved to a prison hospital in a catatonic-like state, was unable to communicate and was receiving food and fluids through a tube. He was transferred in June to a civilian psychiatric ward, Lebson added.

Trump said that he had spoken to Gilman and he had asked for "a GREAT cheeseburger when he lands" in the US.

"I will take care of that!" the president added.

A US official who spoke to Gilman after his release said that he was walking and talking. "All things considered he seems to be in good shape," the official said.

Gilman, who served in the US marines for a year between 2019 and 2020 and was working as a teacher when arrested, looked gaunt in a photograph posted by Trump.

Trump said that officials including Marco Rubio, the secretary of state, had been lobbying for Gilman's release.

Baby pulled from rubble but quake toll hits 250

A mother and her six-month-old baby were rescued from the rubble of a building after a 7.4 magnitude earthquake in Colombia killed at least 250 people (Stephen Gibbs writes).

Rescue workers were continuing their search for survivors yesterday, with hundreds still missing. The massive tremor, with an epicentre near the remote western municipality of San José del Palmar, struck on Monday at 7.34am local time. It was strongly felt across the country of 50 million people and in neighbouring Ecuador, Panama and Venezuela.

Amid the destruction were extraordinary stories of survival. In southern Cali, rescuers heard signs of life in the rubble of a five-storey apartment building that had a swimming pool on the roof. After tunnelling into the remains, they discovered a young mother and her six-month-old baby, both of whom were only slightly injured. Video shared on social media showed the dust-covered baby being gingerly extracted from the ruins.

"It gave us a lot of hope to continue working; we have now rescued seven people and are currently searching for more. We have received signs of life from an elderly couple and their seven-year-old grandson," Carlos Ortiz, one of the experts on the site, told local media.

Scientists celebrate Great Barrier Reef recovery
Page 28

Trump hid in food lorry as part of decoy flight
Page 30

CHRISTIAN ESCOBARMORA/REUTERS; JAIME SALDARRIAGA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Rescue workers call for silence so they can listen for the sounds of survivors in the city of Cali, where victims were mourned, below. Top, assessing the damage in Pereira

Hardest-hit was a ring of population centres fringing the Andes. In the city of Pereira, 35 miles from the epicentre, at least 79 people died. The mayor, Mauricio Salazar Peláez, broke down in tears as he told reporters bodies were still being pulled from the rubble.

Jacobo Blandón Pineda, a 25-year-old rideshare driver from Pereira, told The Times: "There are lots of buildings that I was used to seeing now completely reduced to rubble. There are so many people in the streets just wondering what to do and where to go."

Pineda said he realised the earthquake was serious in its first seconds when he saw his mother's "face of terror" as their home shook.

In Cali, Colombia's third-biggest city, 95 people were killed and at least 20 buildings collapsed or were seriously damaged, including the paediatric wing of the de Valle University Hospital.

Earthquake's intensity

Monday, 7.34am (1.34pm BST)

In Manizales, the centre of Colombia's high-altitude coffee-growing region, five people were killed and 600 houses were reported destroyed or partially destroyed. One of the towers of the city's landmark early 20th-century neo-gothic cathedral collapsed.

In the Chocó department, which borders the Pacific and is home to a large Afro-Colombian population and several Indigenous communities, news of the scale of the damage was only slowly filtering out. "My home is damaged, the stairs," Yolanda Morales told The Times from the regional capital, Quibdó. "The football field nearby is heavily damaged. There are a lot of people looking for family members and loved ones here."

One of the first deaths confirmed in Quibdó was that of Jairson Leonel Valencia, the six-year-old son of a local mayor. His portrait was placed outside the mayor's office, surrounded by candles.

On Monday night in Cali, a tourist destination famed for its salsa clubs, the mayor, Alejandro Eder, decreed an overnight curfew. His office said it was necessary to guarantee the rescue efforts being carried out by emergency agencies and "to preserve security in the city" after reports of looting.

Hundreds remain missing or unaccounted for, including 164 Spaniards, according to Spain's foreign minister.

Medellin, the second-largest city in Colombia, was spared the worst of the damage, though many of its residents were shaken by the scale of the biggest quake to hit the area in decades. Thousands poured on to the streets in the minutes after the tremor struck, many with pets in arms and some in their bedclothes.

The earthquakes are proving an early test for Abelardo de la Espriella, the Colombian president. The conservative former lawyer, who has never previously held political office, was inaugurated only on Friday, in a ceremony that was held in Cali, rather than the capital Bogota, as part of his efforts to devolve power to the regions.

Yesterday he flew to Pereira, accompanied by his wife, Ana Lucía Pineda. Given one of de la Espriella's political pledges has been to eliminate cartel leaders, a security operation, including staff carrying a ring of bullet-proof shields, shadowed their every move. "My commitment is to each and every one of the affected families," he wrote on X.

His government has announced an immediate emergency rent subsidy for all those who had lost their homes.

This earthquake follows twin earthquakes of magnitudes 7.2 and 7.5 that struck northern Venezuela on June 24. The death toll in Venezuela this week rose to 6,301. Tens of thousands of people have been left homeless.

Absent Assad and brother given death sentences

Syria

Samer Al-Atrush
Middle East Correspondent

Bashar al-Assad and his brother Maher were sentenced to death in absentia by a Syrian court yesterday, almost two years after the fallen despot was overthrown and fled to Russia.

Assad's cousin, Atef Najib, was also sentenced to death. Unlike the Assads, Najib was unable to flee the country when rebels closed in on Damascus in December 2024. He was in court when the sentences were read.

"Bashar Assad used state agencies to commit war crimes and crimes against humanity," the presiding judge, Fakhreddine al-Aryan, said during the sentencing, which was broadcast live on state television.

Najib, who wore a prisoner's uniform, was found guilty of overseeing the brutal 2011 crackdown in the southern province of Deraa, which prompted an uprising and then a civil war that killed an estimated half a million Syrians.

Adnan al-Masalmeh, a lawyer representing the families of regime victims, praised the verdicts.

"Today is the day of justice for all the wounded, martyrs, detainees and Syrians who were forced to leave their country," said al-Masalmeh. "Today marks a victory of right against injustice, a victory of the Syrian people against the ousted regime."

Bashar al-Assad is in exile in Russia, which has refused to extradite him

Ahmed Al-Sharaa, the new Syrian president and former rebel leader, has promised to hold the former regime to account and the trial represented a measure of justice for the many victims of the former regime, even though it was mostly symbolic.

Sharaa has pressed Russia to hand over former regime officials, led by the Assad brothers. He has agreed to maintain a Russian military presence in Syria, although its bases will not be jointly run by the Syrians.

But President Putin, who provided military backing to Assad until his removal from power, has refused. Although the Kremlin is invested in supporting the new government, handing over the Assads would risk sending the wrong message to its other allies.

Sharaa, a one-time al-Qaeda commander who has distanced himself from his past, has struggled to unite the country and is negotiating with Israel to withdraw its forces from Syrian territory after it seized land in the south in the days following Assad's flight.

Turkey also maintains a large military presence in the north, at the government's request. Syria was gutted by years of corruption and civil wars.

Sharaa has won strong backing from Gulf states and President Trump, who has lifted sanctions on Syria and praised the former militant, even giving him Trump-branded perfume.

STEFANIA D'ALESSANDRO/WIREIMAGE; GETTY IMAGES

Coral featured at Paris Fashion Week, far left, and with Dolce & Gabbana at Milan Fashion Week. Above, a jeweller polishing coral at a workshop in Corsica

Fashion for coral fuels illicit harvest

A gang of divers arrested in Greece have been accused of harvesting red coral, which has soared in value as high-end jewellers champion its ancient allure (Tom Kington writes).

The Italian group were caught after anchoring a leisure craft off the island of Skopelos and pretending to be tourists while cutting the rare coral from rocks on the sea bed. It was shipped in packages with only vague descriptions, raising suspicions of Greek police, who moved in, discovering the vessel was packed with coral-cutting tools.

Authorities said the divers had harvested €800,000 worth of the coral by the time they were arrested, Greek media reported.

Known as "red gold", and costing €5,000 a kilo, red coral forms in colonies over several decades. Its harvesting from Greek waters is regulated, but demand has soared since jewellers such as Van Cleef & Arpels brought it back into fashion.

Dolce & Gabbana, the Italian fashion house, is also celebrating the substance this year, using marine-inspired patterns on fabrics. The label is also using carved coral roses and cherubs in its jewellery, a tribute to the red coral used in southern Italy for centuries.

Most coral harvested in the Mediterranean is taken to the southern Italian town of Torre del Greco near Naples, where it is carved by experts.

Countries around the Mediterranean have taken strides to regulate harvesting and the UN has praised the controlled diving for red coral off the Italian island of Sardinia, where authorities and fishers work together to guarantee stocks are sustained. Algeria, by contrast, is reported to be a source of large quantities of illegally harvested coral.

Maria Salomidi, an expert at the Hellenic Centre for Marine Research, told Euronews that colonies were now at risk and the recent arrests in Skopelos had been a warning sign.

"If one incident has been detected, there have certainly been many more," she said, adding that divers were one step ahead because Greek experts did not know where all coral beds were.

"The sea beds of Greece have not been mapped," she said.

Scientists praise the skies above for Great Barrier Reef's quick recovery

Australia
Roger Maynard Sydney

The Great Barrier Reef is proving more resilient than scientists had feared.

Coral cover on the reef has largely recovered from a mass bleaching reported last year and remains at near-record levels, according to latest data from the Australian Institute of Marine Science (Aims).

Part of the reason for the recovery may have been the monsoon at the beginning of the year, scientists suggested. This increased the amount of cloud cover off Queensland, reducing sea temperatures, which limited the severity and extent of coral bleaching.

Peter Ridd, a marine scientist, said the results indicated that raw coral cover on the reef had been higher in each of the past five years than at any time during the previous 35 years. Ridd said the data showed the principal causes of temporary coral loss over the past decades were from cyclones and crown of thorn starfish plagues, which were both entirely natural. "There is no evidence that these are any worse than in the distant past," he said.

Raw coral cover on the Great Barrier Reef has been higher in each of the past five years than at any time in the previous 35

He also said the data collected by Aims indicated that the reef was in good shape. "It happens to have a great deal of coral in 2026 because there have been few major mortality events over the past five to ten years," he told The Australian newspaper. "The five bleaching events since 2016, which have been widely reported in the media, could not have killed much coral otherwise the 2022-26 statistics would not be so good."

The optimistic assessment was welcomed by Aims, but it said the threat from climate change should not be ignored. "The Great Barrier Reef has again shown its remarkable ability to recover," it said. "But we can't take this for granted. Instead we must urgently act to reduce our carbon emissions and minimise climate change."

Of particular concern to environmentalists are the fast-growing Acropora corals, which are highly sensitive to bleaching. The Aims survey showed reefs dominated by these species remained in a "delicate state where gains can be rapidly reversed". Mass bleaching in 2024 led to coral death in deeper habitats than previously at the southern edge of the reef, suggesting that "deeper waters offer less thermal refuge than previously assumed".

The evaluation of the reef's prospects was reinforced by Unesco, which declined to place the underwater phenomenon on the world heritage in danger list last month.

However, Greenpeace said the reef was "in deep danger from runaway climate heating, coral-killing deforestation run-off, ocean acidification and coral bleaching. With these compounding pressures and a record El Niño around the corner, action to protect the reef has never been more urgent."

Rocket launch explosion slows China's fast-developing space mission

China
Richard Spencer Beijing

China's space programme has suffered a rare setback after one of its workhorse launch rockets exploded less than a minute and a half after take-off.

The Long March 7A rocket was carrying a ChinaSat-4B communications satellite into orbit. That too was destroyed. Chinese state media reported on the accident but did not say whether the dual-purpose satellite was intended for civilian or military use.

Crowds watching the launch on Monday night, from Wenchang on Hainan island, the Chinese equivalent of Nasa's Cape Canaveral in Florida, gasped as the rocket diverted slightly and then turned into a fireball after 85 seconds. The wreckage crashed into the South China Sea.

"The rocket experienced an anomaly during the flight and the launch mission failed," Xinhua, the state news agency, said as footage of the explosion started to circulate on social media.

China's space programme has overtaken Russia's to be the second-largest in the world after that of the United States. Its showpiece projects are deliberately modelled on US plans, including ambitions to put a man on the moon by 2030 and set up a permanent station there by 2040. It already has an operational space station to match America's.

The moon programme uses the Long March 5 rocket, a larger sister version of the Long March 7 and 7A, which share some engine technology. Scientists will have to wait until the results of an investigation into why this Long March 7A failed before they will know whether there are wider consequences.

The Chinese programme had been thought to be safe and of a high standard. The only previous Long March 7A failure was its maiden flight in 2020. Since then, the rocket has been used 16 times.

Like the US, China has brought private companies into the space sector to speed up launches, particularly for commercial use. In January, two launches failed in a single day. One was a private launch by a company called Galactic Energy, whose Ceres-2 rocket was carrying a payload of commercial satellites. The Chinese landed their first reusable rocket in July.

Game, set, macaques: human mimics outpoint pesky monkeys

India
Amrit Dhillon Delhi

An ability to mimic the shrieks of langur monkeys may not seem like a bankable skill, but for some Indians it has become a job, if not a calling.

These vocal professionals specialise in pest control and are being employed to keep out other unwanted primates as Delhi prepares to host the badminton world championships.

The sound of the langur is the only effective deterrent to the smaller rhesus macaques that roam Delhi in large numbers, stealing food and causing havoc. Officials are determined to avoid a repeat of the embarrassment India suffered in January at the India Open badminton tournament, when players were dismayed to see monkeys striding around freely in the spectator stands of Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium. One occupied a seat next to spectators and watched the game, appearing quite engrossed.

In the wild, monkeys flee the moment a langur approaches. With this in mind, precautions are being taken before the event next week by four men skilled in the art of mimickry. In years gone by, trained grey langurs and their handlers were used to repel rhesus macaques from public spaces. The practice was discontinued when langurs became a protected species by law and could not be held captive, privately owned or hired for guard duty.

That created a demand for human langur callers. One, known only by his first name, Jabbar, gave a sample of his talent in a resonant falsetto outside the stadium on Monday. Jabbar said he had previously warded off monkeys around government buildings in central Delhi, for between 20,000 and 25,000 rupees (£155-194) per assignment, though he said the work was only sporadic.

"Getting employment is not consistent, but we do keep getting work from time to time. There are many of us who do it," he added. Jabbar expressed a mixture of pride and embarrassment at the role. "The skill has been passed down generations in my family. I learnt it from my father ... but don't want my son to do it," he said.

Langurs use different calls depending on their mood and circumstances, ranging from loud whoops during displays of dominance to short, sharp and guttural sounds when agitated. When New Delhi hosted the G20 summit in 2023, lifesize cutouts of langurs were installed at some sites and paired with men capable of reproducing their calls.

Automatically closing doors have also been installed at the stadium's 16 entry points to deter monkeys and stray dogs. But it is the langur callers who have attracted the most interest.

"You can laugh at the solution, but you have to love the effort," PV Sindhu, the Indian badminton champion, wrote on X.

Espadrilles with magnets give pétanque players a lift

France
David Chazan Paris

There is good news this summer for pétanque players. The gentle ritual of a game of boules — often accompanied by an early-evening *apéritif* and as much a social occasion as a sport — has just become a little easier on the back.

Instead of bending almost double to pick up the steel balls, players can minimise stooping by wearing specially designed espadrilles.

A small pocket on the side of the canvas shoes holds a magnet powerful enough to pick up a boule from the ground. The player places a foot beside the ball so that the magnet catches it, then raises it until the boule is within easy reach.

Sounds far-fetched? Olivier Gelly, the inventor of the *espadrilles spéciales pétanque*, admits that the idea began as a joke.

"I was having a laugh with some friends over a glass of rosé one evening," said Gelly, 41, the owner of an espadrilles shop in the southern French city of Perpignan. "We were coming out with all kinds of crazy ideas and I said, 'Wouldn't it be cool if I made an espadrille with a magnet for pétanque?'

"We were just larking around but I made a pair anyway, just for fun. I didn't even try to sell them. The magnet was in the sole so when you walked around, anything made of metal on the ground — screws, bolts — stuck to the shoe."

Undeterred, Gelly set about designing a more practical pair with a side pocket into which a magnet can be inserted, and another for the *cochonnet*, the small wooden target ball, or jack. He also added a tape measure to settle the inevitable disputes over whose ball is nearest the jack, which determines the winner.

"We put them on sale and I posted a video showing how they worked," Gelly said. "Even then, it was only meant as a bit of fun." The video was picked up by social media algorithms and translated into several languages. The joke, it turned out, had a market. Since their launch last year, more than 40,000 pairs of the navy-blue espadrilles have been sold.

"We were astonished. It wasn't calculated," Gelly said. "We've even sold more than 100 pairs to British customers and judging by their names they're British, not French people living in Britain."

The UK has an estimated 40,000 regular pétanque players, many competing in pub teams.

More surprising still, about 40 per cent of sales have been to US customers. Pétanque has a small but devoted American following, mainly in California, New York and Florida. Pétanque America, a website that promotes the game, estimates that about 30,000 Americans play with some regularity.

In France, some customers have said they bought them as gifts for their grandfathers, the demographic most closely associated with pétanque, and perhaps the one most grateful to avoid repeated stooping.

"I got my grandad a pair because he's got a bad back," said Jean-Pierre, 30, a software engineer who was playing boules with friends under the shade of chestnut trees in the Square Émile-Chautemps in Paris.

"I told him not to drink too much otherwise he wouldn't be able to stand on one leg long enough to take the boule off his espadrille. He said, in that case he probably shouldn't wear them."

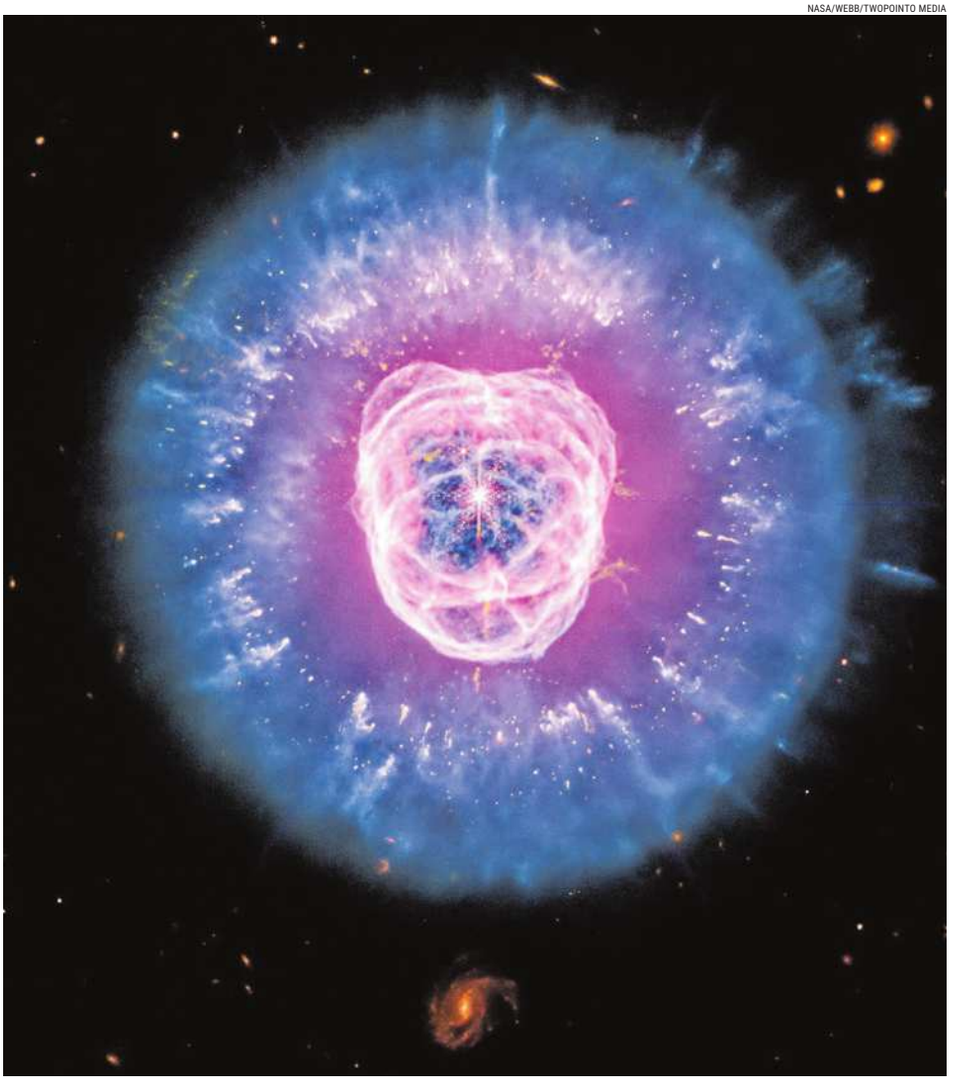
Christophe Blanpied, 39, a Salvation Army worker playing beside the Seine, was more receptive. "It's not a bad idea," he said.

"My knees are already starting to hurt. This could be useful for older people."

He did see a potential flaw, however. "You might be able to use the magnet to cheat by moving someone else's ball during the game," he said.

The shoes have sold 40,000 pairs worldwide

NASA/WEBB/TWOPOINTO MEDIA



Out of this world **The James Webb Space Telescope captures a new view of the Lion Nebula, a cloud of gas and dust shaped by a dying star. Scientists believe the nebula will keep spreading into space until it disperses in about 10,000 years**

Shorter leads after chihuahua's death

David Chazan

France has rules for the shape of a baguette and the type of trunks men must wear in public swimming pools. In some beach resorts, men may also be fined for walking bare-chested in the street.

Now a town in northern France has turned its regulatory attention to dog leads.

Saint-Quentin has introduced a €150 fine for walking a dog on a lead longer than two metres. The measure has been introduced after a husky on a long lead attacked and killed a chihuahua in the Parc des Champs-Élysées in the town in June.

The council said the rule was intended to reassure the public that potentially dangerous dogs would be kept under control, but some dog owners questioned whether **it** would prevent attacks.

"It's pointless," said Guillaume, walking his two dogs in the park. "If you've got a dog weighing 35 or 50 or 60 kilos, the dog will break away if he decides to, even if the lead is two metres or less," he told BFM TV.

Nicolas, another owner, said he would ignore the rule. "You can't keep a dog imprisoned within two metres. Dogs have the right to a bit more freedom."

Others welcomed the move, however. A woman walking her mastiff, who declined to give her name, said: "My dog has been bitten three times by dogs that were let loose. This is a good rule."

Another park user said she carried pepper spray on walks. "There are aggressive dogs and I don't feel safe," she said.

Frédérique Macarez, the conservative mayor of Saint-Quentin, said the death of the chihuahua had demonstrated the need for action.

"The dog that attacked was on a long leash and we saw that the owner couldn't control it," she said. "We need to keep everyone safe — people and dogs."

World

Trump hid in food lorry for air decoy

United States

George Grylls Washington
Sam Rucker New York

With the light fading over Ankara's Esenboga airport, a catering truck drew level with the plane supposed to be carrying President Trump.

Waving farewell to the cameras after attending the Nato summit last month, Trump ascended the stairs to Air Force One and disappeared behind a closed door.

Unbeknown to the journalists on board, however, Trump would not be joining them on the flight. As they boarded the aircraft via the rear door, the president was smuggled off the aircraft in a catering lorry. Using its hydraulic lift, the lorry lowered the president to the ground and drove him to a US military aircraft waiting nearby. While the world believed Trump was flying home on the old Air Force One, he was travelling on a C-32A to RAF Mildenhall in Suffolk.

The ruse was orchestrated by the Secret Service following a credible Iranian threat to the president's life, The Washington Post reported. As Trump was spirited away, journalists were herded into the back of Air Force One, where snacks emblazoned with the presidential seal were waiting on their seats. As they settled down, a Secret Service agent made an unusual request: he wanted the journalists to lower their window shades.

WIN MCNAMEE/GETTY IMAGES

President Trump leaves the old Air Force One at RAF Mildenhall. Above, the lorry that took him off the aircraft in Ankara

The reporters were already suspicious about the unusual build-up to the flight. During the summit in Ankara, Trump had announced he would leave Turkey on a former version of Air Force One "for old time's sake", flying first to Mildenhall.

His post on Truth Social immediately provoked questions. The president had recently received a $400 million Boeing 747-8i donated by Qatar. The jet, renovated with plush seats and golden interiors, had taken the president from the US to Turkey a few days before, but would not be used for his departure.

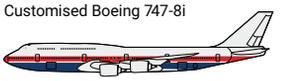
To make the charade more plausible, the old blue-and-white plane flew for part of the journey with the call-sign AF1, which is reserved for aircraft transporting the president. The C-32A carrying Trump apparently used the generic call-sign RCH18.

The situation in the Middle East had become more dangerous since the entourage set off from Washington. The ceasefire between the US and Iran had collapsed and both sides were firing missiles at each other across the region.

Trump's announcement that he would travel back to the US on the old Air Force One had prompted many to speculate whether the aircraft given by Qatar was equipped with the security modifications necessary to deal with an Iranian attack.

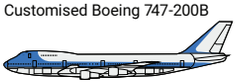
All the president's planes

New Air Force One
Customised Boeing 747-8i



Length	76.2 metres (250ft)
Wing span	68.4 metres
Range	7,730 nautical miles
Max altitude	13,100 metres

Old Air Force One
Customised Boeing 747-200B



Length	70.7 metres
Wing span	59.6 metres
Range	6,800 nautical miles
Max altitude	13,746 metres

Air Force C-32A
Military version of Boeing 757-200

Length	47.3 metres
Wing span	38 metres
Range	5,500 nautical miles
Max altitude	12,727 metres

The old Air Force Once could deploy counter-measures such as chaff to thwart a missile. Many suspected Trump had been advised to travel on his old, trusted aircraft because Turkey shares a border with Iran and the president was geographically closer to the conflict than at any point since the war began — regardless of the president's claims that he was ditching the Qatari jet so American troops stationed in Britain could see it for the first time.

One element of mystery over the Ankara diversion remains.

After departing Turkey, the three planes – the Qatari-donated jet, the old Air Force One transporting the journalists and the C-32A carrying Trump – arrived in the UK safely.

However, on the tarmac at RAF Mildenhall, the Secret Service appeared to have pulled off another sleight of hand.

Somehow, Trump seemed to have reboarded the old Air Force One without anyone noticing, meaning he could walk down the aircraft's stairs in front of the cameras and maintain the illusion that he had travelled on it with the journalists.

The White House press office took part in the deception by publishing a picture of Trump arriving in the UK with a caption stating that the president had landed at RAF Mildenhall "aboard the former Air Force One".

After disembarking the old Air Force One, Trump and the journalists continued their journey across the Atlantic on the Qatari jet.

The president often comes to speak to journalists mid-flight when he travels abroad and, over the Atlantic, he answered questions for around 15 minutes. Asked why journalists had been instructed to close their window shades on the tarmac in Ankara, Trump alluded to the threats on his life from Iran. "Because you're probably on a dangerous flight because of the sleazebags that we have to deal with," he said.

Perhaps realising that the journalists were not entirely reassured, in a moment of rare solidarity with the press, Trump said that at least everyone was at risk from Iran.

"But if I go, you go, right?" he said. "Perhaps some day you want to change professions."

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Campaigners demand Nazi bunker be preserved

Germany A bunker underneath the site of Hitler's chancellery in Berlin could be lost to a new housing project. The Berliner Unterwelten heritage association says the bunker is one of four that have survived from the many built by the Nazis in the district around the Brandenburg Gate. The group said the bunker, covering about 13,450 sq ft, is "a historic site that absolutely must not be destroyed". The neighbouring bunker was where Hitler committed suicide in 1945.

Social media checks urged after Ceuta crisis

Spain The European Commission has ordered Meta and TikTok to step up fact-checking after false social media posts contributed to an influx of migrants from Morocco to the Spanish territory of Ceuta. The measures aim to stop criminals using misinformation to encourage dangerous crossings. About 80,000 people entered the enclave last month, while more than 100 people died. The platforms will be expected to identify and remove content encouraging such crossings.

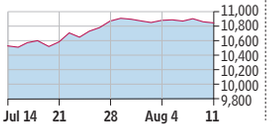
Diner buys €300 lobster then returns it to sea

France A customer at a restaurant in the Alpes-Maritimes region in the southeast of the country bought a live lobster for €300 (about £250) and then released it into the Mediterranean. Stéphane Lamart, president of an animal welfare association, told France 3 Côte d'Azur: "I was told it was €10 per gram: I was deeply shocked that anyone could decide that an animal's life is worth €300." He does not know if the lobster survived. "But I gave it a second chance."

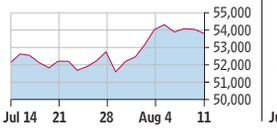
Business

WORLD MARKETS (Change on the day)

FTSE 100
10,844.19 (-18.31) ▼



Dow Jones
53,791.85 (-184.13) ▼



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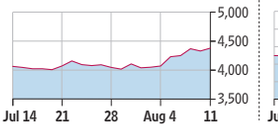
Gold
$4,382.35 (+44.58) ▲



Brent crude (6pm)
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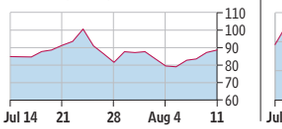

CURRENCIES

£/$
$1.3512 (-0.0012) ▼

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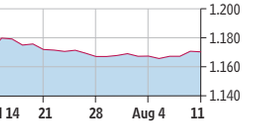


Lack of skilled young farmworkers 'threatens UK food security'

Guy Taylor Retail Correspondent

The dairy giant behind Lurpak and Cravendale has warned that a shortage of skilled young workers threatens Britain's food security.

Arla Foods, a dairy co-operative which supplies British largest supermarkets, said its farmers were struggling to fill vacancies because of a lack of qualified candidates. More than half reported that keeping employees had become harder since Brexit and Covid.

According to a survey by the company, 82 per cent of dairy farmers with a vacancy said that either "very few" or "no" job applicants had the right skills.

Arla, which employs about 3,700 people in the UK and works with 1,900 farmers, warned that hiring problems had grown from a "labour shortage to a wider skills challenge that could have implications for the long-term resilience of British food production if left unaddressed".

This had been compounded by an ageing workforce, with 48 per cent of the 440 farmers surveyed over the age of 55, and nearly a fifth over 65. The most recent government figures showed that only 5 per cent of farmholders in England were under 35.

The findings will fuel concerns about the long-term resilience of Britain's food supply, which is under further pressure this summer as the widespread drought threatens harvests.

Analysts at Shore Capital warned that the UK was the closest it had been for many decades to a food security crisis. Vegetable and fruit growers were "particularly exposed" given their dependence on irrigation and consistent soil moisture and dairy farmers were facing acute pressure on milk yields as heat stress affected cow herds and grass dried up across the country.

British farmers have also suffered dramatic subsidy cuts and are grappling with immediate macroeconomic headwinds, including higher employment costs and potential shortages of fertiliser amid the Iran war.

Arla said that government proposals,

Continued on page 34

Tech giants' hidden $1trn leases

Hyperscalers on the hook for huge debt liabilities in drive to compete in AI revolution

Chris Dorrell
Technology Business Correspondent

Five of the world's biggest tech groups have racked up $1 trillion in off-balance sheet spending commitments to drive the AI revolution, potentially masking long-term debt liabilities underpinning the boom, analysts have warned.

Goldman Sachs has calculated that the indebtedness of the so-called hyperscalers could be "understated" as a result of the accounting practice.

The figures highlight the vast scale of cash being mobilised in the global scramble for the computing capacity needed to power AI, with leases sometimes agreed a decade in advance.

Google's owner Alphabet, Amazon, Meta, Microsoft and Oracle's combined active and future spending on leasing space in data centres hit $1.5 trillion, according to Goldman Sachs. About $1 trillion in spending is tied to leases that have not yet started, meaning they do not have to be included in financial statements.

"These 'uncommenced' lease commitments are not reflected in the financial statements, even though they will result in future lease payments (or other obligations) in upcoming years," analysts at the bank wrote.

"This treatment can understate leverage and future liquidity needs as these obligations are eventually recognised and contractual payments come due."

Under US accounting rules, the liability from a lease is only recognised when the lease starts. A lease that has been agreed but not commenced is listed as footnotes in financial reports.

Microsoft had the largest disclosed pipeline, at $329.1 billion, with leases set to commence between 2027 and 2033. Oracle disclosed $260 billion of commitments. Meta disclosed obligations of $279 billion for the first six months of the year, covering data centres and network infrastructure, with leases scheduled to begin out to 2036. Last month the Facebook owner signed another $68 billion in data centre leases.

Alphabet reported $85.2 billion of uncommenced leases, while Amazon disclosed $137.2 billion, a figure that also include spending on warehouses, offices, aircraft and vehicles.

While the commitments cannot simply be added to the company's debt pile, their scale still reflects how much of the AI buildout does not yet appear in the company's accounts.

Ratings agencies treat the leases differently. Fitch and Moody's incorporate operating leases into the adjusted leverage metrics after the lease has commenced. Leases that have not yet started are considered as part of a "qualitative overlay".

S&P does incorporate the leases into its adjusted debt metrics. "Although these leases may not yet be recognised on the balance sheet, they reflect committed obligations that are unlikely to be avoided without significant cost or disruption," the company explained.

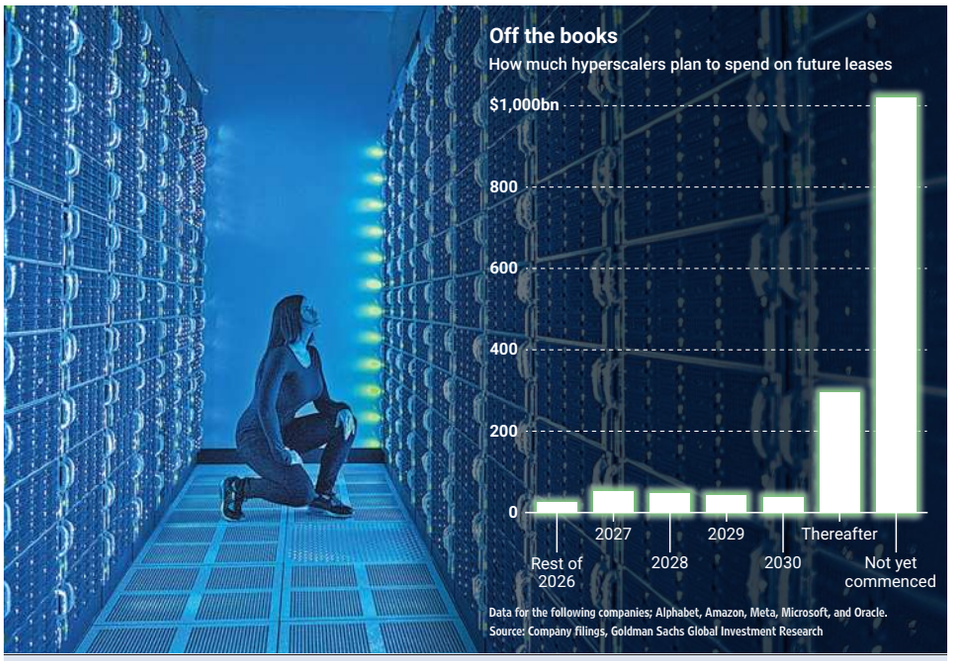
The figures come as investors grow increasingly uneasy about Big Tech's huge spending commitments, which are increasingly funded by debt.

As well as leasing out computing capacity from third parties, the hyperscalers have vastly increased their own capital spending. The five companies will spend $745 billion this year on chips, power generation and constructing data centres, more than double last year.

The scale of capital spending has put pressure on free cashflow, which fell to its lowest level in a decade last quarter, and has pushed the tech giants to tap debt markets. So far this year they have issued a combined $194 billion in debt, according to Goldman, up from $108 billion last year.

Amanda Lynam, at Goldman, said: "What they're doing is getting ahead of a multi-year investment cycle. We think of it as a waterfall of capital, almost exhausting the depth of these capital markets — debt, equity, internal cashflows — to position themselves to be able to invest in this business."

Other companies are also seeking innovative ways to fund the AI buildout. Nvidia said on Monday it had signed agreements with six of the largest finance houses on Wall Street to mobilise a $500 billion package that will provide capital to help frontier AI labs, enterprises and neoclouds access Nvidia's chips.



CoreWeave beats analysts' expectations

Robert Miller

CoreWeave edged past analysts' estimates for quarterly revenue last night, driven by strong demand for its computing services that power artificial intelligence systems.

The cloud infrastructure technology company reported total revenue of $2.58 billion for the second quarter to the end of June, compared with analysts' average estimate of $2.56 billion, according to data compiled by the London Stock Exchange Group.

Earlier this year Nvidia, the chipmaker, invested $2 billion in CoreWeave stock and in its latest quarterly update the company said it had received a $1 billion strategic investment from Jane Street.

CoreWeave, whose close ties with Nvidia have made it a key supplier of Nvidia's AI chips, has attracted several high-profile customers so far this year. It has signed cloud capacity agreements with Meta Platforms and Claude creator Anthropic.

To meet the surging demand, CoreWeave has been ramping up infrastructure investments, which has put pressure on its profit margins. The company said its technology and infrastructure expenses jumped 125 per cent to $1.51 billion in the quarter.

Michael Intrator, co-founder and chief executive, said: "CoreWeave is built on the conviction that AI is foundational to every industry and that realising its full potential requires a purpose-built platform. This quarter reinforced that conviction."

The shares rose $6.56, or 7.1 per cent, to $95.56 in after-hours trading on Wall Street, valuing the company at just over $49 billion.

Need to know

1 Five of the world's biggest tech groups have racked up $1 trillion in off-balance sheet spending commitments to invest in AI, potentially masking long-term debt liabilities underpinning the boom, analysts have warned. Goldman Sachs says the indebtedness of the so-called hyperscalers could be understated as a result of the accounting practice. Page 31

2 The dairy giant behind Lurpak and Cravendale has warned that a shortage of skilled young workers threatens Britain's food security. Arla Foods, said its farmers were struggling to fill vacancies because of a lack of qualified candidates. Page 31

3 One of Britain's largest developers has urged the government to bring back Help to Buy and cut stamp duty to stimulate the housing market. Bellway has told the government it must "act now to improve access to housing across all tenures".

4 Food and drink suppliers have warned that the UK faces higher grocery costs and potential shortages as record hot weather grips the country. The lack of rainfall is likely to lead to shortages of fruit and vegetables, putting upward pressure on food inflation going into 2027. Page 34

5 Room revenue growth at InterContinental Hotels Group, the company behind the Holiday Inn and Crowne Plaza chains and Six Senses resorts beat first-half expectations after strong trading in the US and China offset falls in the Middle East. Page 37

6 More than ten customers have signed up to get high-speed access to President Trump's Truth Social posts by paying as much as $100,000 a month. The service could give traders early access to market-moving posts from Trump before others. Page 39

7 Factories are abandoning plans to electrify operations because they are unable to find out how much it will cost to connect to the grid or how long it will take. An inefficient system is actively deterring progress on decarbonising the economy, says ADE: Demand, a trade body for energy users. Page 40

"The Iran war is one risk to the economy's resilience. The October budget is another

David Smith, **page 35**

For expert business analysis subscribe to the business newsletter thetimes.com/newsletters

Hollywood big beast set to pounce on Theatreland

A Hollywood super-agent is set to buy the company behind the Lyceum and Savoy Theatre in London as well as the Bristol Hippodrome for about £4.5 billion.

ATG Entertainment, which owns dozens of theatres across the UK and has produced recent versions of Cabaret and Pretty Woman, has signed a definitive agreement to be acquired by Ari Emanuel's Mari Group, which runs London's Winter Wonderland, the Miami Open tennis tournament and festivals at Hampton Court Palace and Blenheim Palace.

Mari, which Emanuel founded last year, is backed by a consortium of investors including Apollo Global Management, RedBird Capital Partners and the Qatar Investment Authority. Mari's first purchase was the Frieze global art fair, which it bought from Endeavour, the talent and entertainment group Emanuel co-founded three decades ago.

The ATG acquisition reflects the company's confidence in the "growing power of live experience and the passionate audiences it brings together", Mari said.

It pledged to act as a "long-term custodian" of ATG's 70-strong portfolio of theatres, saying it will invest in preserving and modernising the venues as well as improving the audience experience.

Woking-based ATG was founded by the husband-and-wife team Sir Howard Panter and Dame Rosemary Squire in 1994 as the Ambassador Theatre Group. The pair left the company in 2016,

Cut stamp duty and revive Help to Buy, urges Bellway

Tom Howard Property Correspondent

One of Britain's largest developers has urged the government to bring back Help to Buy and cut stamp duty to stimulate the moribund housing market.

Bellway has told the government it must "act now to improve access to housing across all tenures", with demand for new-build homes having weakened in recent months amid higher mortgage rates, the war in Iran and political upheaval closer to home.

Jason Honeyman, the chief executive, wants to see last year's stamp duty increase for first-time buyers reversed immediately and also called for a return of the Help to Buy deposit support scheme to "ease affordability constraints and stimulate demand".

"We're realists, we understand that the government can't do much about mortgage rates, but they can certainly help young people," he said.

"We need a stamp duty cut [for first-time buyers] to reverse the extra taxes put on by this government in April 2025 and we need a deposit support scheme to help young people."

Honeyman, 58, said demand-side stimulus was needed to boost the housing market, which has "paused" since the war in Iran drove mortgage rates higher. Reflecting the subdued backdrop, Bellway's order book is a fifth smaller than at this point last year at £1.2 billion. However, a government spokesman said yesterday that at present "there are no plans" for a reintroduction of Help to Buy.

All the housebuilders have been looking to top up their cash piles and strengthen their balance sheets as they weather another lean period of trading. In the year to the end of July, Bellway completed 9,695 homes — 11 per cent more than in its previous financial year, partly owing to more "bulk sales" to institutional landlords. The new-home builds were a couple of hundred more than City analysts had expected and meant Bellway ended its financial year with £158 million compared with £42 million at the same point in 2025.

However, the extra bulk sales, usually done at slightly cheaper prices, meant the annual profit margin, at 10 per cent, was almost a full percentage point lower year-on-year. As a consequence Bellway expects an annual underlying profit of £320 million for the year just gone; more than the £303.5 million it delivered in its previous financial year but £4 million or so less than what analysts had pencilled in. "It's a credible performance, but you can see we've driven volume hard to generate cash but at the expense of margin," Honeyman said.

Bellway shares rose 38p, or 1.8 per cent, to £21.38, although that is 22 per cent below where they began the year.

British developers have faced a number of headwinds in recent years. Most have said at some point that the government needs to step in and support first-time buyers, who are particularly struggling with affordability, because they will only build what they can sell.

In spring last year the government lowered stamp duty thresholds across the board. Previously, first-time buyers did not have to pay stamp duty on any portion of the purchase below £425,000, but that has been reduced to £300,000. Bellway wants the old threshold restored and believes that would "get the market moving" right away. Longer-term, it thinks a government-backed deposit support scheme, like Help to Buy, is needed.

With Help to Buy, which ran between 2013 and 2023, the government provided equity loans to first-time buyers, meaning they needed to borrow less and so could access cheaper rates. Critics argued the scheme only served to inflate builders' profits and pay packets.

"I don't think [a return of Help to Buy] needs to be controversial," Honeyman said. "Developers should pay fees to access [the scheme] and it should be focused simply on first-time buyers and have a price cap. I think that's healthy."

Analysis

It is at best dubious to claim that increases to stamp duty lead to lower tax revenues because the higher tax rate discourages buyers and pushes down property transactions (Jack Barnett writes).

HM Revenue & Customs calculated how negatively or positively property buyers would respond to a stamp duty increase or cut, calculations used by the Office for Budget Responsibility to predict how such changes would affect tax income.

Based on these models, the stamp duty changes of April last year would have been expected to have pushed down property transactions by about 3 per cent over the next 12 months.

However, also based on the HMRC models, revenues would still be higher than if there had been no stamp duty increase, in part because of a steep spike in transactions in the months leading up to the cut-off period.

In reality property transactions and revenues exceeded expectations. Sales were 85,000 higher than anticipated and revenues were about £2 billion larger.

In following years, there is a drag of about 3 per cent on transactions, equating to about 30,000 missed sales.

What this exercise illustrates is that, for all its faults, stamp duty is a pretty safe bet for a government looking to increase its tax income.

People criticising stamp duty should not, however, focus on its efficacy to raise revenue, but focus on the damaging social and economic impacts it has.

It stymies labour mobility, prevents downsizing and is a big hindrance to first-time buyers getting on the property ladder. There are better ways to tax property.

JOHAN PERSSON; AMY SUSSMAN/GETTY IMAGES

Theatres including the Lyceum, home to The Lion King, and the Savoy will come under Ari Emanuel's Mari Group

three years after Providence Equity Partners took it over in a £350 million deal.

Under Providence's ownership, ATG expanded rapidly in the United States through acquisitions and now operates seven venues on Broadway, including the Lyric, which is home to *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*, ten venues in London's West End, as well as theatres in Spain and Germany.

ATG claims to host about 16,000 performances and welcomes over 18 million theatregoers a year.

After decades expanding Endeavour through acquisitions into a sprawling corporate empire, Emanuel is arguably one of the most successful and influential behind-the-scenes figures in Hollywood.

Endeavour was bought in a $13 billion deal by Silver Lake, the private equity group, which completed last year. As well as leading Mari, Emanuel is chairman of WME, a talent agency whose star-studded client list includes Cillian Murphy, Billie Eilish and Oprah Winfrey.

"I've spent my whole career in entertainment ... I've seen the industry reinvent itself many times, but live has only grown more powerful," Emanuel said.

"ATG has built one of the world's great theatre businesses around that experience."

Melanie Smith, global chief executive at ATG Entertainment, said Mari was "the right home for our next chapter" as it "understands live entertainment and what matters most to ATG: our theatres, the people behind them and the relationships we have built with producers, artists and audiences".

She added: "We look forward to this new era and thank Providence for their unwavering support over the past 13 years."

Harrods recovery after Al Fayed payouts

Isabella Fish Retail Editor

Harrods has bounced back into the black after abuse payouts to hundreds of victims of its former owner drove it into an annual loss.

The store recorded a pre-tax profit of £84.9 million in the year to the end of January, according to its latest accounts. It is an improvement on the previous year's pre-tax loss of just over £34 million, caused by £62.5 million in payouts to the victims of Mohamed Al Fayed's decades-long abuse.

Hundreds of women have come forward in recent years alleging Al Fayed raped or sexually assaulted them during his 25-year ownership of Harrods.

Al Fayed died in 2023 and a BBC documentary the year after, and subsequent inquiries, prompted more victims to speak out. The women are pursuing compensation through multiple routes. Harrods has its own redress scheme for former employees who say they were abused while at the store.

Other claimants, including nannies, private assistants and air stewards employed by Al Fayed personally, are seeking damages from his estate via separate legal firms.

This year Harrods increased its efforts to wrest control of Al Fayed's estate from his family amid concerns about its finances and administration. The executors are understood to include his widow, Heini Wathen, and two of their children, Jasmine and Camilla Fayed.

A High Court hearing has been scheduled for November to consider the Knightsbridge store's "passing-over" application that would see members of Al Fayed's family removed as executors of his estate and replaced by professionals.

Founded in 1849 as a modest Knightsbridge tea and grocery shop, Harrods has grown into one of Britain's best-known luxury department stores. Despite a global slowdown in high-end retail spending, strong international tourism and the loyalty of high-net-worth customers has compensated.

In the latest financial year, turnover rose 1.2 per cent to £1.1 billion. Operating profit before exceptional items was £172.3 million, a fall on the prior year's £177.7 million, which Harrods said reflected ongoing investment in salaries and increased distribution costs.

Harrods said an average 3.2 per cent pay rise for employees had cost it £8.5 million, while increased national insurance added £5.7 million.

Harvey Nichols, a rival to Harrods, has warned it could collapse without a rescue deal, as Mike Ashley's Frasers Group closes in on the store chain. In accounts filed this week it said it would "cease trading" if it were unable to find a buyer and no additional funding was provided.

Staff were abused by Mohamed Al Fayed

Fenwick's turnaround plan reduces losses

Isabella Fish

Annual losses at Fenwick have reduced as its three-year transformation plan begins to bear fruit.

The UK's largest family-owned department store reported a pre-tax loss of £22 million in the year to end of January, against a deficit of £35 million the prior year. Operating losses narrowed by 40 per cent to £23.4 million.

Turnover increased slightly to £179.2 million, from £177 million in the previous year. Like-for-like gross sales rose by 2.5 per cent, driven by what Fenwick described as "continued momentum" across its shops and website.

Fenwick said "progress was achieved despite continued challenging retail conditions and marks the successful completion of the first year of the group's strategy to return the business to sustainable profitability".

Founded in 1882 by the former draper John James Fenwick, the retailer operates eight department stores alongside its ecommerce business. Its portfolio includes sites in Newcastle upon Tyne, Kingston upon Thames, Brent Cross, York, Canterbury, Colchester, Tunbridge Wells and Bracknell. It employs about 2,000 people.

The sale of its Bond Street store in 2022 marked the end of Fenwick's 130-year presence on one of the world's most prestigious shopping streets.

The proceeds were used to fund digital investment and refurbishments across its remaining stores as part of a plan to modernise the business and adapt to changing consumer habits.

Fenwick said it had also made "substantial" progress in de-risking its defined benefit pension schemes, completing buy-in transactions with Aviva to secure all remaining pension liabilities across both funds.

Sian Westerman, Fenwick's chairwoman, said the latest annual results "demonstrate that our strategy is delivering. Fenwick is now in a stronger position than it has been for many years, and I am confident our three-year strategy will return the business to sustainable profitability."

Garish shopfronts make high streets less compelling, leading article, page 25

Questions mount over Fern's fees

BUSINESS COMMENTARY *Alistair Osborne*

Some people think it's only the chancellor who makes a killing out of inheritance tax. More fool them. How about Simon Rogerson, the co-founder boss of Octopus Group?

Among his myriad lectures on how "people and the planet deserve better", he's somehow found the time to create a loss-making private outfit, Fern Trading, that's been milking it at the expense of the taxpayer from a nice inheritance tax (IHT) wheeze. Indeed, it's been so lucrative, that since Fern's inception in 2010, its manager — Octopus Investments — has siphoned off more than £900 million in fees.

How Rogerson has done it is instructive. He saw a chance to exploit loopholes around UK business relief: a tax incentive on qualifying assets, such as shares in private trading companies or Aim stocks, that reduces or eliminates 40 per cent IHT if held for at least two years and at the time of death.

So, he built Fern: a business today with about 18,000 elderly, though wealthy, investors, holding shares in 300-plus qualifying assets, spanning wind and solar farms, risk-free lending, housing and broadband fibre. In its latest annual accounts — to June 2025 — Fern lost a net £437 million, with an operating cash outflow of £117 million.

Still, who cares about that? Octopus's fees are largely based on what for years was 2.5 per cent of Fern's "market cap". How is the market cap in a private company calculated, you ask? Oh, Octopus makes it up. Or, as it prefers to put it, evaluates it according to "international private equity and venture capital valuation guidelines". Whatever, until 2024, based on an internal share price, its value had gone up every year to hit £3.5 billion: enough for Octopus to take out more than £100 million of fees in each of the past two years.

True, since The Times started pointing all this out, the market cap's been cut to £3.17 billion, while Octopus is now levying a 1.85 per cent fee. Still, where in the public markets would you ever find a business with Fern's assets trading at such a vast premium to its £2.16 billion net assets? And not least one with £1.04 billion net debt that's not generating any cash.

Sure, as long as they get the tax relief, maybe Fern's investors don't care — about the finances or the fees or the mere 3 per cent target returns, which aren't even that lately. But perhaps they're paying a bit more attention now — because, since last month, Fern has suspended trading in the shares, while it pursues a "potential M&A transaction". Please don't call this "gating" or you'll get an essay from Octopus, insisting there are no Woodford-style liquidity issues. But either way investors can't get their money out, with Fern's next update to shareholders due on August 18.

The M&A deal in question? Fern trying to buy TalkTalks's wholesale broadband network PlatformX Communications for what's vaguely put at "hundreds of millions" of pounds. And, whatever happens, this looks a decisive moment for Fern. No way could it do this deal without highlighting the valuation of its own fibre wing. It accounts for 38 per cent of total assets. But Fern wrote it down by £125 million last year after two years of losses totting up to £277 million. Any implication that it's still overvalued would raise fresh questions over Octopus's valuations of Fern's other assets.

Then, another question: how does Fern pay for the TalkTalk business? Higher debt? A rights issue? Yes, Octopus Investments, with £14.6 billion under management, can afford it. But if it puts up the money won't that dilute Fern investors?

Justifying the suspension, Kristy Barr, Octopus's retail investments chief, says the "transaction could have a material impact on value" and "we don't believe it would be fair for some investors to buy or sell at a price that doesn't reflect the true value of what they hold".

Yet, Octopus has already given us one valuation disaster with Titan VCT, down £700 million-plus on its peak. And as Eugen Neagu, director of N2 Asset Management, puts it, Fern's sliding shares and trading suspension have rattled investors, underlining that business relief schemes "carry valuation risk, concentration risk, and liquidity risk" and, in his opinion, "are better avoided". Political risk, too. The questions are getting more taxing for Octopus's Fern fee bonanza.

Flights of fancy

More hot air from Thomas Woldbye. In his campaign for the airport's £49 billion third runway extravaganza that, incidentally, its trillionaire owners expect the passengers to pay for, the Heathrow boss has got all revved up about this: "The case for expansion has never been clearer, as Heathrow was overtaken in July by Istanbul airport as the busiest hub in Europe". What a humiliation.

Still, a key reason for Istanbul handling 8.15 million travellers in July versus Heathrow's 7.86 million? Aeroflot — one of Istanbul's leading carriers at an airport dominated by Turkish Airlines. Would Woldbye prefer things if Britain lifted the ban on Russia's state-backed airline and let Putin and his cronies in, perhaps with a nice bit of novichok in the hand luggage? Instead of specious stuff like this, Woldbye should focus on halving the price of his project. This sort of argument is a turkey.

Disco inferno

Luckily, Hinkley Point C spent £700 million, including a "fish disco", to stop the finny flotilla being sucked into the nuclear plant. But, with the seas warming up, will that be enough? Three reactors at the Gravelines plant in France have just been shut down over fears that a titanic swarm of jellyfish could clog the water cooling systems.

Apparently, jellyfish don't have ears and are a bit hard of hearing. So, they may not even know they're at a disco — even with Bob Marley's *Guava Jelly* on repeat.

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Teen's farm app takes the toil out of admin

CHARLES MCQUILLAN FOR THE TIMES

Ben O'Connor realised he wanted an agriculture career after his class sold calves in a school project

While most teens waiting for their GCSE results have spent the summer getting sunburnt, watching TV and playing video games, 16-year-old Ben O'Connor was testing his software tool on more than 160 farms (Niamh Curran writes).

A Co Down native, O'Connor's FarmFlow app helps farmers to administer their human resources planning. It ran a pilot between May and August, enlisting farms from across the UK, Ireland and Germany.

"The pilot has taught us a lot. At the start we had lots of features, we were trying to accommodate everyone," O'Connor said. "They used it for a while and then realised it's not right for their farm, because a lot of them didn't have any staff to manage or didn't have certain things that our software was providing. So we scaled back a lot of the features and they're loving it."

O'Connor, who grew up on a fourth-generation family farm in Castlewellan, was not convinced he wanted to stay in agriculture. But last year he worked on a project in school where he and classmates raised and sold five calves. The project — organised by the Irish agri-food group ABP Food — made him realise that although he may not be "really suited" to working in agriculture full time, he wanted to continue in other ways.

His family switched to dairy farming two years ago, after being beef farmers. O'Connor had noticed the new time-management issues they were facing, so he started working on the app last October.

"I was starting to see problems on our own farm and I was just trying to solve it because there's lots of farm management software out there, but there's not many that actually manage the people in the business side of the farm," O'Connor said.

He started working on the idea last October while studying for his GCSEs at Lecale Trinity Grammar School in Downpatrick, while still helping milk cows in the evenings. It took a lot of "balancing" and late nights, while his older cousin helped with coding and developing the app itself.

FarmFlow aims to save livestock and dairy farmers three to five hours a week of administrative work. The app's main feature is task management where a farm owner can assign a worker tasks which are then marked as complete. The app also allows farmers to keep track of documentation, such as their livestock's medical records.

However, O'Connor emphasised the importance of the app's Farm Signals feature, which allows workers to highlight health and safety issues, using a traffic light system to show their urgency. These can include a broken slat in the dairy floor or tracking the lameness of a cow.

The app is being offered on a "freemium" model, keeping the core features such as Farm Signals free, while charging for extra ones "because cashflow on farms, especially dairy farms, can be so tight".

This is not O'Connor's first foray into entrepreneurship. He started a business selling firewood when he was just nine, and founded Giftery at the age of 13, a mail-order gift basket company that sold 200,000 baskets across three years.

O'Connor said he liked to "solve problems and experiment" and thought his young age offered the perfect time to try entrepreneurship.

"You don't have as much pressure to live on your own and stuff like that," he said. With his GCSE results looming, he said they "hopefully should go OK" but he is not sure yet if he will carry on to A-levels.

He had been accepted on to a marketing apprenticeship at Unilever, but turned it down after deciding he was "too young" to move to London.

O'Connor is working on expanding FarmFlow and setting up a "group of businesses" in the human resources sector. He is building tracking software for HR firms and interview training chatbots.

Heatwave 'to affect food supply and push up prices'

Jack Barnett Economics Correspondent

Food and drink manufacturers have warned that the UK faces higher grocery costs and potential shortages as record hot weather grips the country.

The lack of rainfall and arid conditions were likely to lead to higher prices and lower supplies of fruit and vegetables, putting upward pressure on food inflation going into 2027, experts said.

The supply of a number of UK-grown crops, such as broccoli and cherries, has already come under pressure, while poor grain harvests are driving up the cost of animal feed, which could lead to more expensive meat.

The warning from the Food and Drink Federation (FDF) comes as Britons brace for the fifth heatwave of the summer, with temperatures expected to reach as high as 38 degrees tomorrow. More than two thirds of England has been declared to be in drought this week.

Dr Liliana Danila, chief economist at the FDF, said: "Not only is the UK experiencing one of its hottest and driest summers on record, but across most of Europe heatwaves and severe droughts are impacting fruit, vegetable and grain supply. Competition for fewer resources will in turn push up the price of ingredients for manufacturers.

"The UK's food and drink manufacturers work hard to absorb costs where they can, but are already grappling with rising costs as a result of war in Ukraine and in Iran, so we expect the additional upward pressure of reduced crops will be reflected in retail prices into next year."

Britain's rising cost of living since 2022 has been primarily caused by a surge in the price of everyday essentials. Food inflation climbed to a peak of 19.2 per cent in 2023 and household bills went up rapidly after Russia's invasion of Ukraine four years ago.

At its interest rate meeting last month, the Bank of England warned that an especially strong El Niño weather phenomenon, as has been predicted this year, would lead to "hotter and drier conditions across several agricultural-exporting regions [which] could reduce crop yields and put upward pressure on global food prices".

The Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board has said that milk production has already been affected by the extreme heat, with production yields affected by heat-stressed cows and poor conditions for grass grazing.

NatWest has drawn up plans to offer loan repayment holidays and overdrafts to its more than 40,000 farming borrowers who face the prospect of lower crop yields.

The bank warned that the impact could outlast the immediate heatwave, with warmer weather increasing the risks of disease outbreaks and damaging livestock productivity.

Ian Burrow, head of agriculture at the lender, said: "British farmers are increasingly being forced to manage the consequences of weather extremes, from flooding one season to drought the next.

"The challenge for many businesses is no longer simply recovering from a single event but building resilience for a future where these conditions are becoming more frequent.

"With harvests progressing earlier than usual in some areas and livestock farmers already relying on winter feed stocks due to poor grass growth, cashflow and feed availability could become increasingly challenging."

Analysts at Shore Capital have warned that Britain is facing its worst food security crisis in decades as heatwaves damage wheat yields, vegetable crops and milk production.

Agriculture 'needs more help' amid drought and skills gap

Continued from page 31

including the farming roadmap and initiatives to help young people into work, were welcome but had "not gone far enough".

Paul Dover, UK agriculture director, said: "The food supply chain has been facing increasing pressure from workforce challenges for a number of years, and the latest data from our farmers shows the picture is not improving. This is a challenge that will impact beyond the farm, if action isn't taken.

"Government proposals like the farming roadmap and its efforts to help young people into work through courses in schools are helpful and will go some way to supporting farmers, but the reality is we need intervention much earlier."

Bas Padberg, managing director of Arla Foods UK, said: "If we want a resilient food system capable of feeding future generations, we must invest in the skills, education and pathways that will build the workforce of tomorrow."

Roughly a fifth of farmers said they needed help to recruit, train and develop the future workforce, according to the survey.

About 14 per cent would prioritise a "nationwide marketing campaign" to help attract more talent.

The government said: "Attracting bright new talent into agriculture is vital for the future of UK food and farming.

"Ongoing reforms to the skills system, including a V Level in agriculture, environmental and animal care, will strengthen training routes, reform apprenticeships and improve careers pathways into farming, giving young people the practical, hands-on learning they need to progress.

"Our 25-year Farming Roadmap sets out a clear vision for the future so our farmers can have the confidence once more to invest and feed the nation with pride for generations to come."

Dairy cattle herds have been hit hard by the lack of rainfall this summer

David Smith

UK economy is resilient but Healey's Treasury is an unknown quantity

Later this week we will get official figures showing how the economy did in June and, more importantly, in the second quarter of the year. Economists are split on whether the June monthly GDP figure will be up a little or down a little. They are, however, united in the belief that there will have been growth in the second quarter, probably of 0.3 or 0.4 per cent.

Anticipating official figures so close to their release date (tomorrow) breaks one of the rules of forecasting, which is that you should predict a figure, or a date, but never both at the same time. But hey, let us see what happens. Economists' confidence in a second quarter rise in GDP is in large part because monthly GDP in April and May was 0.4 per cent above the first quarter average. Something really bad would need to have happened in June to upset the applecart.

True, the second quarter rise in GDP is unlikely to match the brisk 0.6 per cent jump in the first quarter, though if it did it would be a cause for celebration. But to have maintained decent growth in the context of the energy shock generated by the war on Iran is quite an achievement. Things did not look nearly so promising three to four months ago. When the Strait of Hormuz closed, they looked pretty desperate.

The GDP figures, assuming they follow the script, are not the only evidence of a UK economy that has been resilient in the face of the latest shocks. The latest Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC) report on jobs showed, as it put it in its headline: "Recruitment landscape improves as permanent placements stabilise and temp billings rise further."

Permanent job placements have been weak for four years, their weakness pre-dating Rachel Reeves's raising of employer national insurance. These signs of stabilisation are thus a cause for mild optimism.

The UK economy has proved more resilient to external shocks than feared. Last year it grew through President Trump's tariff war with America's trading partners and allies, including Britain. So far this year it has grown even through the energy shock caused by the US president's inept and ill-conceived war with Iran.

MEYSAM MIRZADEH/TASNIM NEWS AGENCY/AP

America's main war aim appears to be the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz

Significantly higher petrol and diesel prices have, it seems, been absorbed by motorists. Department for Transport figures show that car use in the first half of last month was slightly higher than a year earlier, when fuel prices were much lower. The household energy price cap, at one stage predicted to rise sharply, is heading for a small increase in October, at worst, kept down by the government's decision to scrap VAT, for now, on domestic electricity bills.

We should not, though, count our chickens before they are hatched. There are still dangers on the horizon. I won't go into detail on the drought as a constraint on economic activity and driver of higher prices, though perhaps I should.

On Iran, America's war aim now appears to be limited to reopening the Strait of Hormuz, returning to the position we were in before the missiles started flying.

Whether to reopen or not, however, now appears to be in the hands of Iran, a sworn enemy of the West, which is not good. Not only that, but the impact of the war and the closure of the strait on oil prices would have been a lot bigger if countries had not drawn on their strategic reserves to supply the market. Countries have been supplying the market from these reserves, limiting the effect of the conflict on prices.

The question is how long this can continue. Official figures from the US Department of Energy show that America's Strategic Petroleum Reserve dropped below 300 million barrels of oil last week, the lowest since 1983.

China, with a much larger strategic reserve of between 1.3 and 1.4 billion barrels of oil, has done a lot to stabilise the market in the wake of the energy shock, more than any other country, by restricting oil imports after the strait's closure and drawing down its reserve. But there are limits to even China's ability to do this.

The war with Iran and the ongoing energy shock is one risk to the economy's resilience. The October budget is another. Though economists are already speculating about how much John Healey may have to raise taxes in his October 28 budget, such speculation is, at this stage, unanchored. I can't speak for all my colleagues, but I don't get the impression that budget musings are being whispered to them by those in the know. After all, most were wrongfooted by Healey's appointment when all the speculation was that it was a fight between Shabana Mahmood and Ed Miliband.

Not only that, but the economic advice that the prime minister and chancellor are receiving, apart from that they get from civil servants, is something of an unknown quantity.

As this newspaper has reported, the economic "dream team" talked of when Andy Burnham was on his way to No 10 — Lord O'Neill of Gatley, Andy Haldane and the former Office for Budget Responsibility chairman Richard Hughes — is yet to be assembled and may never be. Nobody ever minds being associated with providing advice to a new prime minister (some recent prime ministers clearly excepted) but any formal role as yet seems so far unconsummated.

The good news is that budget speculation is not yet as frenzied as it was a year ago, when it was one of the big stories of the summer and autumn. But it can be expected to gather pace next month, as it always does. What needs to be avoided is a damaging freeze on investment, recruitment and spending decisions because of the uncertainty.

The economy has proved resilient so far but it would not take too much to knock it back. It has happened before and it could happen again. Amid the many priorities of the new administration, avoiding that should be one of them.

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'AI means firms need flexible office space'

Tom Howard

Companies are seeking more flexible office space because they have no idea what artificial intelligence means for their future headcounts, the world's largest supplier of serviced offices has claimed.

IWG, which operates the Regus and Spaces brands, said the rapid rise of AI had meant that for most business leaders it was "impossible to know how much office space they will need in just two years' time".

"Against this backdrop, businesses are increasingly seeking workplace strategies that allow them to scale up or down quickly," Christian Schmitz, IWG's new chief executive, said.

"In an environment of constant technological change, organisations need the agility to adapt."

IWG was founded by Mark Dixon, a former hotdog seller, in 1989 when he opened his first office in Brussels, having spotted a need for temporary office space for executives on the move. It now has more than 2,200 centres around the world, which can be rented out for a day, week, month or year.

Rather than buying or leasing its own office space to rent out, IWG is increasingly partnering with landlords, who hand over space in their buildings for IWG to run as a serviced office. Reflecting the extra demand from companies not fully knowing how AI will affect their operations, IWG enjoyed a record first half as its revenues climbed 6 per cent to $2 billion, up from $1.9 billion in the opening six months of 2025.

However, IWG fell to a $20 million loss before tax during the period, compared with a $12 million profit a year earlier. This was blamed on higher interest costs on its $1.25 billion debt pile and a $65 million rise in general and administrative expenses. IWG suffered a cash outflow of $55 million over the six months compared with cash inflow of $51 million in the first half of 2025, which Allen Wells, an industry analyst at Jefferies, called "weak".

IWG has bought back $100 million of its own shares so far this year and committed itself to another $50 million before the end of 2026. The market, however, had hoped that management might expand the buyback programme, but Wells said the weaker cashflow "may reduce confidence in the timing of further buyback announcements".

IWG shares fell 2.6p, or 1.4 per cent, to 183¼p yesterday and are now a fifth below where they started the year.

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Business

Pub regulator targeting Stonegate

The adjudicator faces scrutiny as it examines the UK's largest pubs group. **Jessica Newman** and **James Hurley** write

For those who have spent years urging the UK's pubs regulator to take a tougher stance to protect tenants, the launch of an investigation into Stonegate came as a welcome surprise.

Fiona Dickie, the Pubs Code Adjudicator (PCA), last month invited publicans, industry advisers and Stonegate's current and former staff to contribute evidence to an investigation into how the UK's largest pubs group treats its tenants. In response, many tenants have spoken publicly about what they claim have been the disastrous financial and personal consequences of taking on a Stonegate pub.

The reaction of those who have long been demanding tougher action from Dickie — on alleged issues such as exorbitant pricing, misleading financial dealings and the poor condition of pubs — could be summarised as "about time". What has received less attention is that the Stonegate investigation, only the second since the regulator was created, comes as the code and the adjudicator are facing existential scrutiny.

Established in 2016, the code regulates the relationship between "tied" pub tenants and the large pub-owning businesses that rent pubs to them and sell them beer. It was intended to address an imbalance of power under the centuries-old "beer tie", under which pub tenants are contractually obliged to buy certain supplies from a pub company (pubco) landlord. This is typically at considerably higher prices than available on the open market, in return for lower rent charged by the pubco.

The extent to which this new regime has worked, or remains a good fit for a much-changed pubs sector, is being examined. A statutory review takes place every three years. Alongside this, the government has also commissioned a full "post-implementation review" of the regulator.

Launching this work last year, Justin Madders, then minister for employment rights, competition and markets, said: "The time is now right to ask if the current model still works" and "whether the PCA is still required, should be retained in its current form or should be reformed or consolidated with another public body". The review closed last August. A year on, the government is still weighing up what to do.

In fairness, there is plenty to consider. Since the code was introduced, the pubs landscape has altered markedly, with changes including a reduction in pubs covered by the code; an increase in "managed" operations, where the pub company employs the pub operator instead of working with semi-independent tenants; and a rise in other models not covered by the legislation.

Phil Dixon, a veteran pubs adviser described by Stonegate as an "industry expert", said: "The adjudicator has been well-meaning, but ultimately it hasn't made much difference. It is a quango going through the motions."

Compared to other industry watchdogs, the PCA's jurisdiction is limited. It covers six big pub-owning companies in England and Wales that operate 500 or more tied pubs: Stonegate, Marston's, Admiral Taverns, Greene King, Star Pubs & Bars, and Punch Pubs. It also only covers particular dealings within those estates. At the time of the code's introduction in 2016, it applied to about 11,500 pubs. By 2024, this had dropped below 8,000, but there was an increase to about 8,500 by 2025.

The adjudicator said it had "played a pivotal role to empower tied tenants and protect fairness in the tied business relationship, helping to create a fairer and more transparent regulated pub sector in England and Wales". It said while the sector had changed since the code was introduced, "changes in the last five years have been much less pronounced" and the size of the regulated estate had stabi-

David McDowall, chief executive

Spirax spooks investors despite its strong results

Charlotte Bend

One of the Britain's leading industrial engineers disappointed investors after failing to upgrade its full-year guidance with the interim results.

Spirax Group, which provides thermal energy and fluid control technologies for a broad range of industries, including oil and gas, chemicals and mining, reported a 54 per cent rise in pretax profit to £135.4 million in the six months to the end of June. Revenue was 5 per cent higher at £863.8 million over the half year against a year earlier.

However, Spirax stock fell sharply after the company failed to lift its full-year guidance on the back of the strong interim results and a 3 per cent rise in the dividend to 50.4p per share. The shares were down 425p, or 5.6 per cent, at £72.25, making it the biggest faller on the FTSE 100.

Analysts at Jefferies said they were "very much surprised" by the large fall and reiterated their "buy" recommendation, viewing the share price drop as a "more attractive entry point" offering a "good buying opportunity".

Spirax's main revenue came from Europe, the Middle East and Africa, which accounted for £381.5 million in the six months despite supply chain disruptions from the conflict in the Middle East. Spirax reported £335.1 million in revenue from the Americas and £147.2 million in the Asia Pacific region.

Spirax was founded in 1888 and has its headquarters in Cheltenham with operations in 70 countries.

Nimesh Patel, the chief executive, said: "Continuing momentum in end markets such as [semiconductors and biopharmaceuticals] as well as strong order books, underpin our expectations for second-half revenue and profit growth and we are reiterating our full-year guidance."

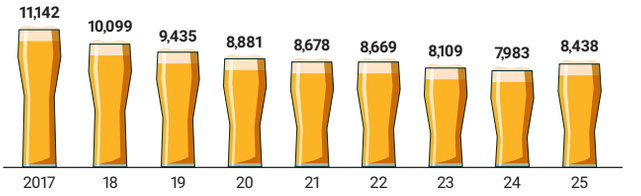
faces a fight for its own future

VICKI COUCHMAN

of Stonegate, at its Sir John Balcombe pub. The company is being investigated by Fiona Dickie, the pubs code adjudicator

Ale-ing?

Total number of pubs code agreements at March 31 each year



Source: Pubs Code Adjudicator

lised. But Dickie, has told the government one of the core tenets of the rules — that tied pub tenants should be no worse off than if they were not subject to any tie — risks being undermined.

She has warned of "limited and diminishing access" for tenants to enter a "market rent only" (MRO) arrangement, the term for the option provided under the code to buy beer and supplies on the open market. She said this "may place restrictions on the ability" of the code to deliver the "no worse off" principle.

Tenants' representatives argue that far more tenants would be going free-of-tie if the code gave them sufficient bargaining power and rights to do so.

Dixon said that only a small proportion of publicans have moved to MRO, "although it has at least been a catalyst for people to negotiate better pricing under the tie". He said the bigger issue was that "much of the pricing across the industry remains shocking, particularly for the most loyal tenants. What is really needed is the ability for tenants to challenge the prices they get from their own pub company."

Tenants and the pubs industry have highlighted a lack of activity from the regulator, albeit from different perspectives. Before the launch of the Stonegate investigation, there was a growing feeling in the industry that the code might be on its way out. A source within one of the "big six" companies said they believed there was a "genuine chance of having it [the code] curtailed". The British Beer & Pub Association, the industry body, said in response to the review last year that it was "heartening" it was happening amid a desire to reduce "the acute cost burden on our sector".

The industry is now in a less optimistic mood, and not only because of the high profile of the "Stonegate debacle", as one industry source called it. The review also comes in the context of a new pub-loving prime minister and a new chancellor whose stance on regulators encouraging growth as well as enforcing rules — as championed by Rachel Reeves — is not yet clear.

Another pub company boss said there was a "growing nervousness" that the alleged Stonegate issues may reflect badly on other businesses. "No one wants to be tarnished with the same brush," they said. Ian Cass, former chairman of the Forum of British Pubs, a tenants group, said the rules had not worked. "It was supposed to stop unfair behaviours from the pub companies and provide a fair alternative deal option of a market rent only, which was supposed to be easy, cheap and quick.

"In reality, the pub companies found a whole new range of unfair behaviours, [and] the MRO option proved to be costly, time consuming and difficult to achieve because the pub companies made it so. The solution now is to scrap the code and the adjudicator and to remove the tie from all pubs. [The tie] has turned into a Frankenstein's monster of an agreement," Cass said.

The adjudicator notes that of the 453 MRO processes launched between April 2022 and March 2025, more than one in three resulted in a free-of-tie agreement — a similar proportion to the previous three-year period. But Dixon warned that the industry was now structuring most agreements with operators outside the protection of the Landlord and Tenant Act. "Where there are no rights, good entrepreneurs won't go near you. If you have an agreement only a fool will sign, you will end up with too many fools in the industry."

He said the vast majority of pub companies with fewer than 500 sites, which are outside the regulation, signed up to a voluntary code to treat tied tenants fairly, including a rent review service and arbitration and conciliation.

Dixon said a beefed-up version of this, which he believes should be mandatory for any operator with more than ten pubs, should replace the code. "The beauty of self-regulation is that if an issue crops up, the industry can adapt and resolve it. With the code, you are stuck with what was written in 2015."

Tom Stainer, chief executive of the Campaign for Real Ale, believes that while the PCA serves a necessary function, it is hampered by a narrow scope. He believes much of the criticism of the regulator stems from this, with people expecting it to "to act with powers that it doesn't have", and Stainer thinks the adjudicator requires "more teeth" and a significantly broader mandate.

The government has indicated that previous reviews have shown the code is achieving its two main requirements: fair and lawful treatment and the "no worse off" principle. A government spokesman said it would publish the review as "soon as possible".

Stonegate has said it is "completely committed" to the code and that "publicans are at the heart of our business". It has said it is co-operating with the investigation but noted it is "investing record amounts in our properties, tenant applications are at record highs and publican tenures are at record lengths".

World Cup helps IHG beat forecasts

Jessica Newman

Room revenue growth at the hotel company behind the Holiday Inn and Crowne Plaza chains and Six Senses resorts beat first-half expectations after strong trading in the United States and China offset sharp declines in the Middle East.

InterContinental Hotels Group, which has over 7,100 hotels in more than 100 countries, reported revenue per available room (revpar), a key industry metric, 4.1 per cent up in the six months to the end of June, above analysts' forecasts of 3.3 per cent growth.

In the Americas, IHG's biggest region, revpar was up 4.8 per cent, boosted by a "strong" US economy and solid demand in cities where World Cup matches took place.

In China, revpar grew 3.1 per cent as a result of a "particularly strong" first quarter supported by "excellent" leisure demand over Chinese new year. IHG said there had been growth in all of its 21 brands, but its luxury chains such as Six Senses, Regent, Kimpton and the Vignette Collection continued to deliver the strongest results.

"The very affluent are very affluent ... and they never really stopped spending", Elie Maalouf, IHG's chief executive, said. "People are really preferring experiences over goods, they are spending on experiences despite geopolitical tensions, despite temperatures — people still want to travel."

The FTSE 100 company's performance in Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Asia was mixed. Overall, the region registered revpar growth of 3 per cent, as growth slowed in the second quarter after the start of the Iran war.

While the UK recorded growth of 3.1 per cent in the second quarter and continental Europe 2.3 per cent, trading in the Middle East deteriorated significantly. The region, which accounts for about 5 per cent of IHG's global hotel room numbers, moved from a revpar decline of 2 per cent in the first quarter to a drop of 19 per cent in the second quarter. Maalouf said the company's hotels in the region were "trading better with every going month since the peak of the conflict in March and April".

About 90 per cent of IHG's hotel pipeline in the Middle East is in Egypt, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, which Maalouf added were countries slightly more sheltered from the conflict.

IHG reported total revenues of $2.6 billion in the first half of the year. While operating profit rose 10 per cent to $665 million, the number was below analysts' expectations of about $673 million. The miss was related to a £5 million insurance expense at a hotel damaged by a fire.

Analysts at Bank of America said IHG's second-quarter results looked "solid in this tough hotels reporting season". This month, its rivals Marriott and Hyatt lowered their full-year forecasts for net room growth.

Analysts at Jefferies said that "key money remains under control and the full-year outlook is reiterated".

IHG's shares closed up 25 cents, or 0.2 per cent, at $155.80.

Building supplier's Dubai unit victim of war scam

James Hurley

A FTSE 250 buildings supplier has said that fraudsters exploited the war in Iran to steal money from its Middle East operation.

Genuit, which provides ventilation and energy and water-saving products, said it had been hit by a "social engineering fraud" which had resulted in a claim on its crime insurance policy.

The company released few details about the scam but said that it had cost it £600,000 in excess costs on its insurance policy. It did not disclose how much the insurer had paid out.

Social engineering is a term for when scammers trick people, such as company employees, into giving away sensitive information or into processing fraudulent payments.

Its understood that Genuit's Middle East division, based in Dubai, was targeted shortly after the Iran war began in a scam said to be designed to exploit concerns about the conflict, and that funds were transferred in error. Genuit indicated there had been no breach of its IT systems but it is understood it has implemented measures to prevent a repeat of the issue.

In interim results for the six months ended June 30, the company said revenue had edged up 3.4 per cent compared with a year earlier, to £307.8 million. However, pre-tax profits slid by almost 40 per cent to £19.1 million, partly because of a £1.5 million provision for "slow-moving stock" and a supplier quality failure. Both issues were at Adey, its water treatment arm.

Underlying pre-tax profit fell 9.5 per cent to £10.5 million. Genuit said trading in the first four months of the year was affected by the Middle East conflict and wet weather.

Shares in Genuit fell 17¼p, or 5.6 per cent, to close at 288p.

Business

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	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Strategic Bond Fund ‡	129.95		-0.49	8.11
UK Equity A ‡	400.02		-1.75	3.95
UK Growth ‡	10384.05		-76.67	2.22

ARTEMIS FUND MGRS

0800 092 2051

Authorised Inv Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Global Income Fund R Acc ‡381.81			+1.59	...
Global Income Fund R Inc ‡214.71			+0.9	...
Global Select Fund R ‡	226.83		-0.59	...
High Income Fund R Inc ‡	66.88		-0.14	...
Income Fund R Acc ‡	808.96		-5.28	...
Income Fund R Inc ‡	310.06		-2.02	...
Monthly Dist & R Inc ‡	92.37		+0.31	...
SmartGarp Eurp Equity R ‡898.28			-2.41	...
SmartGarp Global Equity R ‡693.33			+4.1	...
SmartGarp UK Equity R ‡4287.93			+1.47	...
Strategic Assets R Acc ‡	94.6		+0.28	...
Strategic Bd R M Acc ‡	116.26		-0.31	...
Strategic Bd R M Inc ‡	52.56		-0.14	...
Strategic Bd R Q Acc ‡	116.05		-0.32	...
Strategic Bd R Q Inc ‡	52.42		-0.15	...
UK Select R Acc ‡	1340.36		-11.13	...
Uk Smaller Cos R Acc ‡	2358.24		-20.09	...
UK Special Sits R Acc ‡	1105.8		-5.91	...

AXA FRAMLINGTON UNIT MGMT

Dling: 0845 602 1952 Priv Clients:0845 777 5511

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Health ‡	3413		+51.00	...
UK Select Opps Inc ‡	2158		-11.00	1.10
UK Sml Cos Inc ‡	332.7		...	0.37
UK Sust Eqty R Dis ‡	238.5		-1.50	1.10

AXA FUND MANAGERS

Admin & Enq 0117 989 0808

UK/Global Investment Companies

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Global Gwth Acc R ‡	288.1		...	0.52
Japan Acc A ‡	162.3		...	1.51

CIS UNIT MANAGERS

08457 46 46 46

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
European Growth ‡	298.90		...	1.14
Sus Leaders ‡	1038		-0.19	1.47
UK Growth ‡@	882.90		...	1.69
UK Income ‡@	258.90		...	3.83

CLOSE FUND MANAGEMENT

Dealing 020 7426 6232

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Winchester ‡	5663.32		...	0.60

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Enqs:0870 601 6183 Dealing: 0870 6083

Share Class 1-Retail

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Euro Gwth & Inc ‡	1620		-7	0.10
FTSE All Shr Track ‡	598.7		-0.3	2.70
Global Gwth SCI ‡	404.7		-0.6	...
Strategic Bd ‡	228.2		-0.5	3.90

EDENTREE INV MGMT

0800 358 3010

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Sust Eur Eqty A Dis ‡@	493.8		-2.50	1.77
Sust Gbl Eqty A Dis ‡@	464.1		+0.40	0.55
Sust Mgd Income ‡	141.4		-0.80	4.72
Sust Sterling Bond A Dis ‡@85.04			-0.33	4.98
Sust UK Eqty A Dis ‡	255.4		-2.90	1.63
Sust UK Eqty Opps A Dis ‡@329.8			-1.40	1.42

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	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Amer Spec ‡	2968		...	...
American ‡	8090		...	...
Euro Opps ‡	745.9		...	0.48
European ‡	4455		...	0.76
Global Focus ‡	3718		...	...
Global High Income Bond A Dis ‡22.37			...	6.38
Global Special Sits ‡	9008		...	...
Japan ‡	976.8		...	0.34
Moneyblder Bal ‡	48.81		...	0.60
Moneyblder Inc ‡	28.17		...	5.04
Moneyblder UK Ind ‡	202.6		...	2.47
Special Sits ‡	7508		...	1.65

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
UK Opportunities Fund A Dis ‡106.9			...	1.41

HALIFAX INVESTMENT FUND MGRS

01296 386 386

Authorised Inv Funds

Share Class C

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Corporate Bond ‡	37.29		...	4.50
Intl Gwth ‡	217.0		...	0.60
UK FTSE 100 IT ‡	108.9		...	...
UK FTSE All-S IT ‡	121.0		...	...

HSBC GLOBAL ASSET MGMT (UK)

Enq:0845 745 6123 Dlg:0845 745 6126 Mon-Frid:8-6

HSBC Index Tracker Investment Funds (OEIC)

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Amer Ind Acc ‡	1641		-1	0.77
Euro Ind Acc ‡	1872		-5	2.27
Euro Ind Inc ‡	1084		-3	2.32
FTSE 100 Ind Acc ‡	442.3		-2.0	2.49
FTSE 100 Ind Inc ‡	179.5		-0.8	2.64
FTSE 250 Ind Acc ‡	410.1		-3.1	2.86
FTSE 250 Ind Inc ‡	222.3		-1.7	2.85
FTSE All-S Acc ‡	1113		-1	2.65
FTSE FTSE All-S Inc ‡	500.6		-0.5	2.79
Japan Ind Acc ‡	235.1		-1.2	1.44
Japan Ind Inc ‡	170.7		-0.8	1.47
Pacific Ind Acc ‡	1046		+5	1.58
Pacific Ind Inc ‡	592.0		+2.8	1.61

HSBC Investment Funds (OEIC) Retail Share Class

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Corp Bd Acc ‡@	311.4		-1.2	4.20
Income Acc ‡	1062		...	3.28
Income Inc ‡@	402.8		...	3.31
Monthly Inc Acc ‡@	313.4		...	3.75
Monthly Inc Inc ‡@	155.9		...	4.02
UK Grth & Inc Ret B Acc ‡@226.2			+0.3	2.97
UK Grth & Inc Ret B Inv ‡@87.66			+0.09	3.04

HSBC Specialist Investment Fds (OEIC)

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
American Index Retail Inc ‡1264			-1	0.76

INVESCO FUND MGRS LTD

Dling:0800 085 8571 Inv Serv:0800 085 8677

Brkr Serv:0800 028 2121

Invesco Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Corp Bond ‡	231.09		...	4.08
High Income Dis ‡	434.17		...	3.14
Income & Growth Dis ‡	506.44		...	3.09
Income Inc ‡	1676.6		...	2.85
Money Acc ‡	107.85		...	3.64
Monthly Inc Plus Dis ‡	92.19		...	5.75
UK Opps UK Acc ‡	1400.45		...	1.46
UK Sml Cos Eqty Acc ‡	1371.53		...	1.20

INVESTEC FUND MGRS LTD

Broker Support and Dealing: 020 7597 1900

OEIC Series I, ii,iii & iv

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
American A Acc ‡	886.78		+6.03	...
Cautious Managed A Acc ‡472.08			-0.65	2.61
Cautious Managed A Inc ‡270.46			-0.36	2.47
Diversified Growth A Acc ‡332.34			-0.05	0.20
Diversified Growth Inc ‡	122.31		-0.02	0.94
Diversified Income A Acc ‡376.63			-0.38	3.78
Diversified Income A Inc ‡	67.82		-0.07	5.20
Emerging Mkts Blended Debt A Ac ‡144.29			-0.41	5.97
Emerging Mkts Blended Debt A Inc ‡66.84			-0.19	7.67
Emerging Mkts Equity A Ac ‡289.06			-1.08	0.04
Emerging Mkts Leaders A Acc ‡1223.94			-5.63	...
Global Equity A Acc ‡	304.83		-0.68	...
Global Franchise A Acc ‡	408.3		+0.8	...
Global Free Enterprise A Acc ‡2124.92			+1.47	...
Global Gold A Acc ‡	568.95		+0.74	...
Global Special Situations A Acc ‡533.62			-0.01	...
Global Special Situations A Inc ‡409.38			-0.01	...
UK Special Situations A Acc ‡2738.2			-24.42	1.03
UK Special Situations A Inc ‡941.69			-8.4	1.04

For ISIS Asset Mgmt see F&C Fd Mgmt Ltd (OEIC)

JANUS HENDERSON INVESTORS

Investor Serv: 0800 832 831 Dlng:0845 946 4646

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
All Stcks Credit A Inc ‡	113.4		...	4.40
Asian Div Inc U Trust Inc ‡ 98.19			...	5.40
Cautious Managed Fd A Acc ‡358			...	3.80
Cautious Managed A Inc ‡ 153.6			...	3.90
China Opp Fund A Acc ‡	1329		...	0.10
Emg Mkts Opps Fd A Acc ‡	298		...	...
Erpn Sel Opps Fd A Acc ‡	3265		...	0.20
Fix IntMnthly Inc Fd Acc ‡ 33.17			...	6.10
Global Equity Fund Acc ‡	6627		...	...
Global Equity Income A Ac ‡89.1			...	2.40
Global Tech A Acc ‡	7102		...	...
Instl UK idx Opps A Acc ‡180.3997			...	2.20
M-Asset Abs Rtn A Acc ‡	187.6		...	2.70
M-Man Active Fd A Acc ‡	338.4		-0.1	1.80
M-Man Inc Grth A Inc ‡	162.9		...	2.70
M-Man Inc Fd Grth A Acc ‡233.4			...	2.70
Sterling Bond U Trst Acc ‡ 229.2			...	4.40
Sterling Bond U Trst Inc ‡ 55.37			...	4.40
Strategic Bond A Inc ‡	95.49		...	5.80
UK Abs Ret Fd A Acc ‡	206.8		...	2.10
UK Alpha Fund A Acc ‡	201.4		...	1.30
US Growth Fund A Acc ‡	3051		...	...

J.P. MORGAN ASSET MANAGEMENT

OEIC

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
UK Equity Core E Net Acc ‡@711.6000			-0.4000	2.52

JUPITER UT TRUST MANAGERS LTD

020 7581 3020

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Distribution & Growth ‡	124.94		-0.6627	2.93
Euro Special Sits ‡	605.15		-0.2111	0.71
European ‡	4027.77		-0.2121	0.61
Financial Opps ‡	1358.29		+0.0680	1.01
Global Macro Bd L GBP ACC ‡427.49			-0.7106	3.87
Merlin Bal Acc ‡	347.9		-0.1643	2.26

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Merlin Growth Acc ‡	839.54		+0.3185	0.20
Merlin Inc Acc ‡@	470.4		-0.1915	3.40
Merlin Wwide Inc ‡	610.66		-0.1395	...
UK Dynamic Equity L Dis ‡297.08			-0.3053	1.75
UK Growth ‡	285.09		-0.2202	0.64
UK Income Trust ‡	1018.36		-1.1849	4.58

LEGAL & GENERAL (UT MANGRS) LTD

Enquiries: 0870 050 0955 Dealing: 0870 050 0956

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Euro Ind Acc ‡@	818.3000		-260.0000	190.00
Euro Ind Inc ‡	488.6000		-160.0000	200.00
Fixed Int Acc ‡	150.0000		-60.0000	460.00
Fixed Int Dist ‡	61.9900		-27.0000	460.00
Global Health ‡	125.5		+1.1	0.90
Glob Tech Acc ‡@	238		-1.3	...
High Inc Acc ‡@	154.2000		-10.0000	570.00
Japan Ind Acc ‡	113.0000		-20.0000	130.00
Pacific Ind Acc ‡	412.3000		+160.0000	140.00
UK Index Trust Acc ‡	540.5000		-20.0000	250.00
Uk Index Trust Dist ‡	234.0000		-10.0000	250.00
US Ind Acc ‡	1432		...	0.50
Worldwide Acc ‡	472.4000		-80.0000	90.00

M&G SECURITIES

Enq:0800 390 390 Dealing Line: 0800 328 3196

Authorised Inv Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Charifund Inc ‡@	1903.87		-5.55	5.12

Sterling Class A Investment Funds 2

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Extra Income Inc ‡	827.19		...	5.10
Gilt & Fxd Int Inc ‡	66.91		...	4.40
Gl Hi Yd Bd Inc ‡	39.77		...	6.25
Index Linked Bd Inc ‡	100.92		...	1.57
Index Trckr Inc ‡	104.99		-0.05	3.00
Short Dated Corp Bd Inc ‡	25.34		...	4.26
UK Select A Inc ‡	3313.68		...	2.64

Sterling Class A Investment Funds 3

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Corp Bd A Inc ‡	32.77		...	5.03
Dividend Inc ‡	66.57		...	5.37
Recovery A Inc ‡	142.9		...	2.84
Sml Cos Inc ‡	365.62		...	2.80

Sterling Class A Investment Funds 4

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Episode Allocation A Inc ‡	161.6		...	3.79

MARKS & SPENCER UNIT TRUST

0808 005 5555

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
High Income ‡	87.29		...	4.60
High Income Acc ‡	297.8		...	4.60
UK 100 Comp Acc ‡	723.6		...	3.10
UK 100 Comp Inc ‡	325.5		...	3.10
UK Select Port ‡	485.5		...	2.90
UK Select Port Acc ‡	1110.7		...	2.90
W'wide Mgd Acc ‡@	1341		...	0.20
Worldwide Mgd Acc ‡@	746.6		...	0.20

MORGAN STANLEY INVESTMENT MGMT

Enquiries: 0800 0961 962

The Morgan Stanley Funds (UK)

Class A Shares

Equity

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Glob Bal Inc F F Acc ‡	1049.40		...	1.54
Glob Bal Inc F F Inc ‡	938.65		...	1.55
Glob Bal Inc F I Inc ‡	936.69		...	1.49
Glob Bal Inc F I Acc ‡	1046.53		...	1.47
Glob Bal Sust F F Acc ‡	1036.68		...	1.65
Glob Bal Sust F F Inc ‡	989.88		...	1.66
Glob Bal Sust F I Acc ‡	1034.12		...	1.57
Glob Bal Sust F I Inc ‡	989.45		...	1.60
Glob Br Eq Fund F Inc ‡	1111.72		...	4.29
Glob Br Eq Fund I Acc ‡	1751.36		...	4.26
Glob Br Eq Fund I Inc ‡	1175.31		...	4.38
Glob Br Fund I Acc (PH) ‡14292.07			...	0.32
Glob Br Fund I Inc (PH) ‡1652.82			...	0.45
Glob Br Fund I Acc (PH) ‡1761.73			...	0.45
Glob Br Fund I Inc (PH) ‡	3844.1		...	0.32
Glob Quality Fund F Acc (PH) ‡1558.29			...	0.49
Glob Quality Fund F Inc ‡1521.19			...	0.51
Glob Quality Fund I Acc ‡1563.28			...	0.34
Glob Quality Fund I Acc (PH) ‡1552.87			...	0.34
Glob Quality Fund F Acc ‡1579.78			...	0.51
Stg Corp Bond F F Acc ‡	144.27		...	4.89
Stg Corp Bond F F Inc ‡	97.83		...	4.91
Stg Corp Bond F I Inc ‡	1377.71		...	4.74
Stg Corp Bond F I Acc ‡	3052.02		...	4.74
US Adv F F Acc ‡	2462.19		...	...
US Adv F F Acc (PH) ‡	1479.19		...	...
US Adv F I Acc ‡	2592.43		...	...
US Adv F I Acc (PH) ‡	1531.50		...	...

SANTANDER UNIT TST MGRS

08457 413002

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Equity Inc Inc ‡	243.9		...	...
Stkmkt 100 Tkr ‡	230.8000		...	...
UK Growth I Acc ‡	657.1		...	...
UK Growth Inc ‡	315.5		...	...

SCOTTISH MUTUAL INV MNGRES LTD

0141 248 6100

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Far Eastern Inc	617.0700	649.4700	...	...
Mutual Far Eastern	1355.3100	1430.4100	+5.07	0.39
Mutual UK Eq	1429.4900	1508.7000	...	7.81
UK Equity Inc	562.2300	593.3800	...	7.81

SCOTTISH WIDOWS UNIT TRUST MNGRS

0845 300 2244

Overseas Growth Investment Funds

Tracker & Special Investment Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
UK Trkr A Acc ‡	606.3		-1.00	2.50
UK Trkr A Inc ‡	275.9		-0.50	2.50

UK & Income Investment Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Corp Bond A Acc ‡@	328.6		-1.30	4.00
Corp Bond A Inc ‡@	107.8		-0.40	4.00
Envir Invtr A Acc ‡	473.8		-1.20	2.10
Hi Inc Bond A Ac ‡@	300.0		+1.60	6.40
Hi Inc Bond A Inc ‡@	70.70		+0.37	6.40
Hi Res A Acc ‡	562.3		-1.60	3.70
Hi Res A Inc ‡	152.2		-0.40	3.80
Strat In A Acc ‡@	228.6		-0.60	4.50
Strat In A Inc ‡@	86.10		-0.24	4.50
UK Eq Trckr A ‡	136.6		-0.30	2.50

OEIC B Class

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
UK Trkr B Acc ‡	671.6		-1.20	2.60
UK Trkr B Inc ‡	274.4		-0.40	2.60

OEIC C Class

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
UK Eq Tkr C ‡	133.4		-0.30	2.60

STANDARD LIFE INVESTMENTS

0845 279 3003

Investment Funds (OEIC)-Retail Shares

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
AAA Inc CAT Acc ‡	98.33		...	2.52
AAA Inc CAT Inc ‡	51.04		...	2.52
AAA Income Acc ‡	108.40		...	...
Amer Eq Gth Acc ‡	293.00		...	...
Glb Advtg CAT Acc ‡	202.9		...	1.32
Glob Advtg Acc ‡	267.50		...	...
Higher Inc Acc ‡	185.90		...	...
Higher Inc Inc ‡	48.11		...	...
Managed Acc ‡	524.1		...	1.83
UK Ethical Acc ‡	256.70		...	...
UK Smlr Cos Acc ‡	823.60		...	...

SVS BROWN SHIPLEY FUNDS

Enquiries:0141 222 1151

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Balanced A Acc ‡	187.18		...	2.02
Blanced A Inc ‡	158.41		...	2.07
Cautious A Acc ‡	133.3		...	2.44
Cautious A Inc ‡	105.43		...	2.48
Dynamic A Acc ‡	500.81		...	1.40
Dynamic A Inc ‡	438.17		...	1.41
Growth A Acc ‡	494.5		...	1.63
Income A Acc ‡	319.89		...	2.17

THREADNEEDLE INVESTMENTS

Client Serv: 0800 0684000

Retail Shares Class 1

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Threadneedle HY Bd Rtl Inc ‡39.368			-0.2	4.65
Threadneedle Mnthly Etr Inc Inc ‡101.6345			-66.54	2.74
Threadneedle SterlingCorp Bd Inc ‡54.7972			-23.27	4.29
Threadneedle SterlingCorp Acc ‡54.6959			-23.27	3.97
Threadneedle Stg Bd Ret Inc ‡39.4736			-21.55	4.18
Threadneedle Strat Bd Ret ‡41.7666			-9.9	3.83
Threadneedle UK Eq Inc Rtl Inc ‡119.9793			-103.66	3.50
Threadneedle UK Growth & inc Rtl Inc ‡113.0191			-88.78	3.20
Threadneedle UK Istl Rtl ‡251.244			+11.7	1.33
Threadneedle UK Mnthly Inc Rtl Inc ‡90.1056			-60.76	3.00
Threadneedle UK Rtl Inc ‡168.3434			+8.82	1.32
Theadneedle U Smaller Coms Rtl Inc ‡407.5818			-287.74	0.38

For Resolution see Ignis

TU FUND MANAGERS LTD

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
IFSL Marlborough Eur A Dis1011	1011		...	1.21

* Yield expressed as CAR (Compound Annual Return); † Ex dividend; ‡Middle price; . . . No significant data. # Periodic charge deducted from capital; @ Exit charge

British funds

Index-Linked

12 month High	Low	Stock	Price (£)	+/–	Int Yld %	Grs rd yld
73.08	63.68	Tr IL 0 ½% 50	64.75	+ .35	0.77	2.48
66.33	57.06	Tr IL 0 ¼% 52	57.92	+ .39	0.43	2.48
101.91	97.20	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 28	99.53	+ .15	0.13	0.36
100.99	97.18	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 29	98.44	+ .16	0.13	0.73
98.50	94.73	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 31	95.89	+ .17	0.13	0.97
88.33	82.97	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 36	83.81	+ .20	0.15	1.86
82.85	76.16	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 39	77.81	+ .27	0.16	2.14
79.32	72.11	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 41	73.21	+ .30	0.17	2.24
74.05	65.19	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 44	67.53	+ .32	0.19	2.40
71.23	62.87	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 46	63.94	+ .29	0.20	2.45
68.00	59.19	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 48	60.33	+ .30	0.21	2.47
60.61	50.05	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 56	51.15	+ .34	0.24	2.41
58.90	48.59	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 58	50.22	+ .40	0.25	2.37
54.25	43.57	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 65	44.99	+ .36	0.28	2.24
53.89	40.40	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 68	43.94	+ .44	0.28	2.18
57.66	42.98	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 73	45.42	+ .56	0.28	1.89
97.88	93.36	Tr IL 0 ¾% 34	94.13	+ .19	0.80	1.57
79.12	70.87	Tr IL 0 ¾% 47	72.01	+ .36	1.04	2.45
62.70	49.79	Tr IL 0 ⅜% 62	53.00	+ .40	0.71	2.32
87.38	80.77	Tr IL 0 ⅝% 40	81.57	+ .28	0.77	2.20
84.28	76.46	Tr IL 0 ⅝% 42	77.32	+ .29	0.81	2.30
104.16	100.95	Tr IL 1 ¼% 27	101.25	+ .16	1.23	0.27
103.67	99.28	Tr IL 1 ¼% 32	100.02	+ .20	1.25	1.25
86.56	72.33	Tr IL 1 ¼% 54	75.51	+ .41	1.66	2.46
85.60	73.36	Tr IL 1 ¼% 55	75.07	+ .39	1.67	2.45
99.52	94.19	Tr IL 1 ⅛% 35	94.90	+ .22	1.19	1.73
97.09	90.76	Tr IL 1 ⅛% 37	91.57	+ .26	1.23	1.96
102.53	95.86	Tr IL 1 ¾% 38	96.87	+ .32	1.81	2.04
99.42	88.49	Tr IL 1 ⅞% 49	89.99	+ .46	2.08	2.44
248.27	236.46	Tr IL 2% 35	241.67	+ .45	0.83	1.70
349.35	338.41	Tr IL 4 ⅛% 30	341.87	+ .59	1.21	0.86

Longs (Over 15 Years)

12 month High	Low	Stock	Price (£)	+/–	Int Yld %	Grs rd yld
26.99	22.31	Tr 0 ½% 61	23.02	+ .21	2.17	5.42
65.04	55.40	Tr 0 ⅛% 51	56.79	+ .33	0.22	2.48
38.39	32.78	Tr 0 ⅝% 50	34.01	+ .21	1.84	5.67
47.60	40.99	Tr 1 ½% 53	42.23	+ .23	3.55	5.73
45.88	39.62	Tr 1 ¼% 51	40.90	+ .23	3.06	5.73
33.04	27.53	Tr 1 ⅛% 73	28.18	+ .19	3.99	5.26
48.44	41.88	Tr 1 ¾% 57	43.00	+ .24	4.07	5.68
48.36	41.73	Tr 1 ⅝% 54	43.07	+ .23	3.77	5.71
41.45	35.65	Tr 1 ⅝% 71	36.48	+ .21	4.45	5.39
57.14	49.76	Tr 2 ½% 65	51.06	+ .27	4.90	5.60
74.02	64.55	Tr 3 ½% 68	66.35	+ .33	5.28	5.59
81.50	72.00	Tr 3 ¾% 52	73.95	+ .34	5.07	5.68
80.90	71.30	Tr 3 ¾% 53	73.11	+ .32	5.13	5.71
88.15	77.58	Tr 4 ¼% 55	79.60	+ .35	5.34	5.69
83.52	73.44	Tr 4% 60	75.20	+ .36	5.32	5.66

Mediums (5-15 Years)

12 month High	Low	Stock	Price (£)	+/–	Int Yld %	Grs rd yld
83.19	79.47	Tr 0 ¼% 31	81.58	+ .14	0.31	4.42
86.27	82.79	Tr 0 ⅜% 30	84.82	+ .12	0.44	4.38
72.25	67.14	Tr 0 ⅝% 35	69.17	+ .20	0.90	4.92
79.97	75.46	Tr 0 ⅞% 33	77.36	+ .16	1.13	4.73
48.97	42.75	Tr 0 ⅞% 46	44.23	+ .23	1.98	5.63
54.44	47.82	Tr 1 ½% 47	49.29	+ .21	3.04	5.67
61.88	55.55	Tr 1 ¼% 41	57.45	+ .21	2.18	5.39
66.75	60.85	Tr 1 ⅛% 39	62.81	+ .21	1.79	5.22
75.83	69.99	Tr 1 ¾% 37	71.81	+ .22	2.44	5.12
55.77	49.19	Tr 1 ¾% 49	50.54	+ .26	3.46	5.67
85.07	81.01	Tr 1% 32	82.91	+ .14	1.21	4.57
82.54	74.42	Tr 3 ½% 45	76.27	+ .29	4.59	5.58
95.49	90.74	Tr 3 ¼% 33	92.18	+ .16	3.53	4.66
80.41	72.57	Tr 3 ¼% 44	74.46	+ .28	4.36	5.55
100.00	85.76	Tr 3 ¾% 38	87.77	+ .26	4.27	5.18
102.40	96.34	Tr 4 ½% 34	97.96	+ .22	4.59	4.81
101.93	0.01	Tr 4 ½% 35	97.30	+ .23	4.62	4.89
96.45	87.54	Tr 4 ½% 42	89.69	+ .30	5.02	5.46
102.33	0.01	Tr 4 ¼% 32	98.47	+ .17	4.32	4.55
100.56	94.70	Tr 4 ¼% 34	96.28	+ .22	4.41	4.82
99.39	92.65	Tr 4 ¼% 36	94.49	+ .23	4.50	4.98
100.00	88.42	Tr 4 ¼% 39	90.48	+ .29	4.70	5.27
100.00	86.92	Tr 4 ¼% 40	89.16	+ .29	4.77	5.34
90.97	81.54	Tr 4 ¼% 46	83.69	+ .35	5.08	5.60
89.58	79.95	Tr 4 ¼% 49	82.02	+ .32	5.18	5.65
101.49	97.47	Tr 4 ⅛% 31	98.47	+ .12	4.19	4.50
100.70	95.57	Tr 4 ⅛% 33	96.91	+ .16	4.26	4.68
104.72	100.54	Tr 4 ¾% 30	101.35	+ .11	4.69	4.40
103.33	96.78	Tr 4 ¾% 35	98.51	+ .23	4.82	4.95
102.00	93.84	Tr 4 ¾% 38	95.90	+ .27	4.95	5.20
102.58	98.98	Tr 4 ⅜% 30	99.80	+ .11	4.38	4.44
97.07	89.07	Tr 4 ⅜% 40	91.06	+ .25	4.80	5.31
100.37	100.22	Tr 4 ⅝% 32	100.18	+ .15	4.62	4.59
100.00	94.52	Tr 4 ⅝% 37	96.26	+ .24	4.80	5.09
100.99	96.96	Tr 4 ⅞% 36	98.81	+ .24	4.93	5.03
105.68	96.52	Tr 5 ¼% 41	98.83	+ .29	5.31	5.37
105.44	93.20	Tr 5 ⅜% 56	95.52	+ .41	5.63	5.69

Shorts (Under 5 Years)

12 month High	Low	Stock	Price (£)	+/–	Int Yld %	Grs rd yld
91.87	89.09	Tr 0 ½% 29	91.28	+ .10	0.55	4.26
98.67	91.49	Tr 0 ⅛% 28	94.50	+ .07	0.13	4.02
99.42	96.16	Tr 0 ⅜% 26	99.37	+ .01	0.38	3.64
91.00	0.01	Tr 0 ⅞% 29	89.76	+ .11	0.97	4.34
97.41	95.29	Tr 1 ¼% 27	97.36	+ .05	1.28	4.17
95.46	92.89	Tr 1 ⅝% 28	94.55	+ .08	1.72	4.25
101.17	98.03	Tr 4% 29	98.97	+ .09	4.04	4.40
101.39	99.44	Tr 4 ¼% 27	100.05	+ .04	4.25	4.21
101.88	98.28	Tr 4 ⅛ % 29	99.26	+ .10	4.16	4.40
100.70	99.60	Tr 4 ⅛% 27	100.04	+ .01	4.12	3.99
101.65	99.40	Tr 4 ⅜% 28	100.11	+ .06	4.37	4.30
107.53	103.38	Tr 6% 28	103.89	+ .07	5.78	4.22

* maturities having an eight-month indexation lag.

This is a paid for information service. For further details on a particular fund, readers should contact their fund manager.

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Traders pay $100k a month to get Trump posts earlier

Graham Ruddick Deputy Business Editor

More than ten customers have already signed up to get high-speed access to President Trump's Truth Social posts by paying as much as $100,000 a month.

Kevin McGurn, the interim chief executive of Trump Media and Technology Group (TMTG), confirmed the sign-ups to the Truth API service as the company posted quarterly results.

The service has been controversial because it could give traders access to market-moving posts from Trump before others. Critics claim it is a conflict of interest and a vehicle for the president to profit from his role.

TMTG owns Truth Social as well as the Truth+ streaming service and a collection of other assets. The largest shareholder in TMTG is the Donald J. Trump Revocable Trust with 41 per cent, according to Factset. This trust holds the president's assets while he is in office. Other investors include Blackrock and Vanguard.

$164m

The second-quarter loss suffered by Trump Media and Technology Group
Source: TMTG

TMTG said the Truth API service offered "a business-to-business data feed subscription that provides licensed, low-latency access to publicly available posts from certain top Truth Social accounts and is expected to provide the company with a new revenue stream".

It added: "TMTG onboarded a number of institutional customers prior to its August 1 launch and, despite receiving what it believes to be factually inaccurate criticism of Truth API, is continuing to onboard additional partners."

McGurn confirmed there had been "more than ten customer agreements signed to date". Customers are being charged between $60,000 and $100,000 a month for the service. High-frequency trading firms are among those to have signed up.

TMTG reported a $238 million loss for the three months to the end of June. The second-quarter figures showed the company had taken a hit from paper losses on the value of its crypto holdings. With those paper losses excluded, it suffered a $164 million loss, compared with a $44 million loss a year earlier.

JULIA DEMAREE NIKHINSON/AP

President Trump's Truth Social platform is owned by Trump Media and Technology Group which is offering privileged access

The company counted the cost of branching out into businesses outside of the media sector , such as cryptocurrencies, online betting, finance and even nuclear energy. It said it would ditch many of the new ventures and refocus efforts on its social media platform and acting as a forum for users to post their views.

McGurn said: "We made the disciplined choice to pivot in order to invest more time and resources in our most important initiatives. We will say no to things or change course as warranted."

He also defended the Truth API service. "Providing licensed real-time public data through commercial APIs [application programming interfaces] is a well-established business practice across the technology, financial information and media industries," McGurn said. "This is no different."

He confirmed that TMTG's nuclear fusion business would continue under the new strategy, with the aim of completing a previously announced merger with the energy company TAE Technologies by the end of the year.

Shares in TMTG were flat at $9.39 yesterday, valuing the company at $2.5 billion.

Federer loses millions from his stake in shoes brand

Guy Taylor

Tens of millions of dollars were wiped off the value of Roger Federer's stake in a Swiss running shoes brand after it reported weaker than expected quarterly sales.

The US-listed shares of On Holding had tumbled more than 19 per cent to $31.32 by lunchtime in New York yesterday as net sales of SwFr850.3 million (£776 million) over the three months to the end of June came in well below the SwFr881.4 million forecast by analysts.

Federer is reported to hold a stake of roughly 3 per cent in the company which would be a loss of about $65 million by the market close on Wall Street, which Forbes estimated would be enough to bring the former tennis player's net worth below $1 billion.

On Holding said it was contending with a "heavily promotional environment" in some markets but would not compromise on pricing. This has meant restricting volumes shipped to certain wholesale retailers before the launch of new "breakthrough innovations" leading into 2027.

It said it expected sales to be in the "low 20 per cent range" for the year ahead, having previously forecast "at least 23 per cent growth". This implies net sales of between SwFr3.47 billion and SwFr3.56 billion this financial year.

David Allemann, co-chief executive, said: "We are proving that a brand can achieve global scale without compromising its premium brand positioning."

Quarterly net sales were still up 13.5 per cent despite missing expectations, however sales through wholesale channels rose by only 4.8 per cent to SwFr461.9 million. Sales in direct-to-consumer were up sharply by more than a quarter to SwFr388.4 million.

On was founded in the Swiss Alps in 2010. Federer first invested in 2019, with the company releasing a limited-edition lifestyle shoe named The Roger the following year. On listed on the New York Stock exchange in September 2021, raising roughly $746 million.

Gross profit this quarter increased by 20.6 per cent year-on-year to SwFr555.7 million.

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ABTA ABTA No. V4744

Factories are abandoning queue for grid connections

Emily Gosden Energy Editor

Factories are abandoning plans to electrify their operations because they are unable to obtain any indication of how much it will cost to connect to the grid or how long it will take.

Britain's inefficient grid connection system is actively deterring progress on decarbonising the economy, according to a report by ADE: Demand, a trade body for energy users.

Industrial sites typically decide whether to electrify when an asset like a furnace or a boiler is nearing the end of its life and they can choose "between a like-for-like fossil replacement and an electrified alternative", the report said.

It found that factories were "choosing to replace ageing equipment with gas rather than electricity because connection costs and timescales were impossible to pin down before investment decisions had to be made". Companies cannot even get a credible early estimate to inform a business case without first committing time and money, it said. "Faced with vague timelines and unpredictable bills, many walk away before filling in a single form."

Early informal guidance can also be enough to deter applications, it said, with users being told the connection wait times are likely to be longer than the timeframe they require.

"If equipment expires in two years and the connection takes eight, the site cannot wait regardless of the quoted price," the report noted.

The fossil fuel replacement for the relevant equipment may last for two decades before the site next considers electrification, so the issue locks Britain into more carbon emissions for longer.

ADE: Demand argues that this problem is going under the radar as "these abandoned projects never appear in official statistics, meaning network operators, regulators and government are judging the system on incomplete data".

The report focuses on businesses seeking to connect to the regional power distribution networks. The process is complex because these connections may have knock-on impacts on the transmission network, from which they draw power. The distribution network companies therefore often need to liaise with both the transmission network operators and the National Energy System Operator (Neso), which co-ordinates various processes at the transmission level.

Ofgem, the government and Neso have over the past few years been implementing a process to reform the grid connection queue for generation and storage after widespread complaints about long wait times to connect renewables and batteries to the grid.

The regulator has also turned its attention to the queue to connect demand to the grid, focusing in particular on the huge surge in applications from data centres. It is carrying out an "end-to-end review" of the grid connections process and ADE: Demand hopes this could propose solutions to address the lack of transparency it describes.

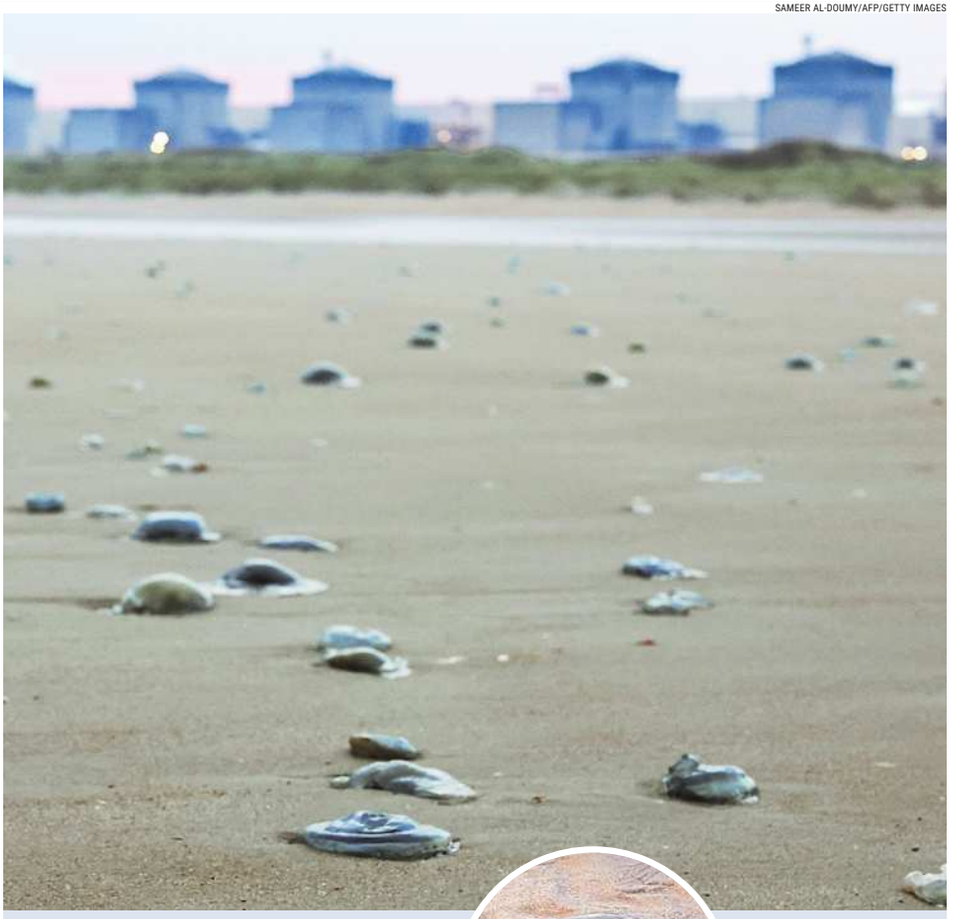
Phil Nicholson, the report's author, said: "Institutions have spent years focused on the generation queue, neglecting British industry. Their opacity, inconsistency and inadequate oversight have created a hidden crisis of their own making. If a business explores electrification and decides not to proceed, that project is never counted. The queue stays short, the backlog looks manageable and the lost investment remains invisible. We are measuring the wrong thing, until we count the projects that never apply, we won't know whether the system is delivering."

David Boyer, director of electricity systems for the Energy Networks Association, which represents electricity network operators, said: "Improving customer connections is a core focus for electricity networks, with connections being delivered at pace to their timelines. We're doing all we can to speed things up and make the system fairer."

A Neso spokesman said: "We recognise the importance of giving businesses greater certainty when planning investment in electrification, which is why we are working closely with government and Ofgem to deliver further reforms to demand connections."

Ofgem said: "We agree with ADE — the current system isn't fit for purpose to deal with the scale of demand for grid capacity. We've worked in detail with businesses on overhauling the system from end to end — with the final decisions out within weeks. It tackles exactly the issues which businesses tell us matter most: unclear costs, uncertain timelines, no accountability when things go wrong."

SAMEER AL-DOUMY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



Jellyfish cause chaos at nuclear power plant

Three reactors at a French nuclear power station have been shut down as a precautionary measure over fears that a swarm of jellyfish could clog water cooling systems (Simon Freeman writes).

Gravelines nuclear power plant, operated by the state-owned power company EDF, activated a safety protocol introduced last year after a similar invasion forced the entire plant, near Dunkirk in northern France, to be taken offline for ten days.

The coastal facility, which is western Europe's largest nuclear plant, is cooled from a canal connected to the North Sea. Its six units produce 900 megawatts of power each, or 5.4 gigawatts in total, enough electricity to supply up to five million homes.

Reactors 2, 3 and 4 were taken offline due to the swarm and reactor 1 was limited to half its output as a preventative measure. Reactor 5 was offline for maintenance and reactor 6 is fully operational, EDF said.

The complete outage last year prompted the operator to implement new monitoring and trawling techniques to try to prevent or limit the impact of future events. EDF has installed fixed cameras at the intake canals and on the filter drum screens to detect any incoming blockages as soon as possible.

The company has also partnered with a French fishing organisation and a sea rescue group, which monitor for swarms and can raise an alert to launch targeted trawling operations to reduce the swarm's density before it reaches the plant. Fishing boats were deployed on Saturday after an initial alarm was raised, limiting the impact from the swarm. The jellyfish that are on site are being removed with vacuum trucks, an engineer said.

No new jellyfish were arriving, so the clean-up was finishing, which should lead to a quick restart of the units, they added. EDF said that the situation "has no impact on the safety of the facilities, the safety of staff or on the environment".

Scientists have warned that such events could become more common due to factors including global warming, the arrival of invasive species, habitat loss of predators and overfishing. Jellyfish are at their most active in the warmer months, as hot weather increases plankton levels at the water's surface, drawing them up from the depths.

Heatwaves and drought are affecting nuclear power stations across Europe. This month Hungary announced it was shutting down its only nuclear power plant because water levels on the Danube were too low. It was the first time in 44 years that the plant had been deliberately taken out of service.

The Gravelines nuclear plant is in partial shutdown as a precaution against jellyfish clogging its filters

Office for National Statistics to launch labour survey in 2027

Jack Barnett

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) believes that November 2027 is the most likely date when it will ditch its existing labour market figures and make the transition to a new dataset that should better capture trends in the UK workforce.

The statistics agency announced yesterday that it will decide in July next year whether "we and our users are ready" to begin to move over to the new labour market figures, which the ONS has dubbed the "transformed labour force survey" (TLFS).

It had previously been reported by Bloomberg that the ONS had earmarked May 2027 as the target rollout date for the new statistics, the initial publication of which has been delayed numerous times. When it first announced it was undertaking work on the TLFS, the ONS set a target first publication date of spring 2024.

A total revamp of the ONS's labour market figures was triggered by a sharp drop in responses to the underlying survey after the Covid-19 pandemic, leading to inaccuracies in the final data outputs. Response rates dropped as low as 12.7 per cent, but have since recovered.

The ONS said on Tuesday that November 2027 "remains the most likely path and balances a data-led approach".

A person close to the development of the TLFS said that they were confident in meeting this deadline despite the previous delays, but they did not completely rule out kicking back the publication to 2028 if needed.

The ONS said: "We are doing everything possible to enable a safe transition in 2027."

The statistics agency added that response rates to its trial TLFS had increased over the three months to June thanks to an increase in the value of vouchers it gave to participants to £20 from £10. It also said that people were more engaged with the survey after the ONS simplified the questionnaire.

Response rates rose to nearly 40 per cent over the most recent quarter from 37.1 per cent in the quarter to end of March. The ONS said: "The median household completion time for Wave 1 is approximately 17 minutes, compared with the [old labour force survey] median completion time of 40 to 45 minutes."

Policymakers have said a lack of accurate labour market data hampered their decision making. Andrew Bailey, governor of the Bank of England, has said that issues with the data are a "substantial problem" for the central bank when it is deciding whether to cut, raise or hold interest rates.

William Kay **Tempus**
Buy, sell or hold: today's best share tips

Hidden world yields bright rewards

KELLER

Market cap £2.1bn | **Prospective p/e ratio** 12

From Sydney Fish Market to Florida's Hard Rock Casino, Keller Group's work is often hidden from view, underground or in the pillars and foundations that support some of the world's best-known buildings. Construction firms rely on specialists like Keller to prepare the ground for their many-splendoured creations. As Keller's name has spread in the past year or so, its shares have jumped from £13 to £34 and they are still modestly rated. Have they peaked, or is this merely a staging post?

In the 1860s, Johann Keller began drilling wells, installing pumps and laying water pipes for nearby villages and farms at Renchen, 12 miles east of Strasbourg. As he had to grapple with varying soil strata and water tables, he became one of the first to develop modern underground drilling techniques.

Fast-forward to 1972 and the firm was taken over by the British engineer GKN, and after a management buyout in 1990 it was independently floated on the London stock market in 1994.

As the world's largest specialist geotechnical contractor, the group holds proprietary technical abilities, specialised equipment and scale advantages that most smaller civil engineering peers cannot match.

It generates over 60 per cent of its revenue in North America, where demand for complex ground engineering is booming in the rush to build data centres, energy transition facilities and large-scale infrastructure projects. The reconstruction of the Interstate 40 motorway across the Tennessee-North Carolina border after a hurricane is the group's biggest single project, worth $380 million so far.

It is worth bearing in mind that Keller is at the sharp end of construction, one of the world's most cyclical industries vulnerable to higher interest rates, property downturns and economic recessions. But the company points out that it is largely concerned with what is going on underground, and can switch between industries, from retail to roads, data centres and much else.

A key skill is designing contracts that protect Keller from the unexpected, such as unforeseen soil conditions, groundwater issues, boulders and other technical problems — vital where profit margins average only about 7.5 per cent. Free cash flow in 2025 was just £175.9 million out of revenue of £3 billion, not far short of pre-tax profits of £197.3 million.

Last week, the interim results showed an 11.1 per cent rise in revenue to £1.6 billion, taking underlying operating profit up 17 per cent to £117.9 million for a slightly improved 7.3 per cent margin. Underlying diluted earnings per share rose 22 per cent to 120.1p. The half-year dividend jumped from 18.3p to 28.7p, and that is slated to be about 35 per cent of the year's total. Net debt shrank from £61.5 million to £15.9 million. James Wroath, the chief executive, said: "We are well positioned to deliver another strong performance through the remainder of 2026 and beyond."

North America was the star performer, delivering an 18 per cent increase in operating profits to about £94 million as it balanced a slowdown in south Florida's residential market with strong infrastructure and data centre work. Wroath has identified hundreds of potential takeover targets in a highly fragmented market there.

Growth in Europe and the Middle East was slightly faster in the first half, driving profits up 29 per cent on lower revenue. Strength in Scandinavia and central Europe offset a weaker western Europe, including the UK, thanks to the pending completion of work on the truncated HS2.

Asia Pacific profits slipped 1 per cent to £14 million, although Australian defence and energy work boosted revenue. So the group is exposed to currency movements around the globe. In the last half-year changing exchange rates produced a £7.6 million profit but a year ago there was a £34.7 million loss.

Peel Hunt says: "The shares have performed very strongly so far this year. On our current forecasts, they are trading on about a 12 times p/e ratio for full-year 2026, dropping to around 11 times for 2027, while the enterprise value/ebitda multiples are 6 and 5.8, respectively."

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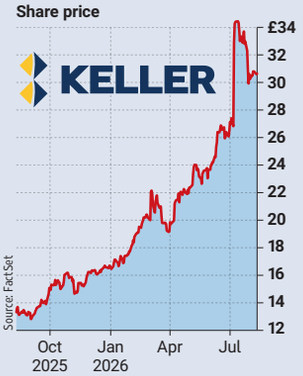
Share price



H1 2026 revenue		% change year-on-year
North America	£984m	▲ 13%
Europe/ Middle East	£396m	▼ 3%
Asia-Pacific	£228m	▲ 25%
Group	**£1,608m**	**▲ 10%**
H1 2026 profit		
North America	£94m	▲ 14%
Europe/ Middle East	£19m	▲ 32%
Asia-Pacific	£14m	▼ 1%
Group	**£118m**	**▲ 15%**

Source: Keller

Capricorn left holding the baby as suitors quit

MARKET REPORT

The best laid plans can oft go awry and so it is the case for Scotland's Capricorn Energy (Robert Miller writes).

Founded in 1980, and formerly known as Cairn, Capricorn had become a target for no less than three suitors. Yesterday, however, two of them dropped out abruptly. Shortly before a 5pm Takeover Panel deadline to make a firm offer, first Alamadiyaf al-Masiyyah, a member of the Cafani Group, said it would not proceed, followed by Samos Energy confirming it would not make an offer to acquire Capricorn.

Still, there's always Genel Energy standing. Capricorn's fellow London-listed company has made a recommended £288 million cash acquisition deal with a shareholder vote due on August 18. With the double drop out, traders not unreasonably bet that Genel will win the day, lifting its shares 1¾p, or 2.8 per cent, to 65¾p, while Capricorn shed a mighty 28p, or 7.6 per cent, to 338p with no better offer in sight.

Higher up the energy chain, it was an altogether brighter picture for the oil companies as Brent crude, the global benchmark, spiked close to $89 per barrel early in the day, after the US made compensation demands to Iran, before pulling back to around $88.35 by the close of trading in London. The gains were pared after diplomatic channels in Pakistan signalled a potential arrangement between the US and Iran. Both **BP** and **Shell** were among the top risers on the FTSE 100, with the former up 11¼p, or 2.2 per cent, at 536p, while the latter was 58p, or 1.8 per cent, higher at £33.56.

This was not enough to save the senior index from closing lower for a second session, down 18.31 points, or 0.2 per cent, at 10,844.19. **St James's Place** also did its bit on the positive side, topping the leaderboard with a rise of 36½p, or 3.2 per cent, to £11.77 as the wealth manager's £128.1 million share buyback found favour. The biggest drag was **Spirax**, down 425p, or 5.6 per cent, to £72.25 after the industrial engineer failed to upgrade its full-year guidance with a decent set of interim results.

The FTSE 250 did end higher, with a gain of 55.21, or 0.2 per cent, to 24,799.75 with **Hunting** producing the best performance, up 23p, or 5.1 per cent, at 474½p. One of the biggest losers was **THG**, down 1¾p, or 4.9 per cent, at 32¼p after a recent downward revision on the share price by analysts.

Wall Street report

Fears that the conflict between the US and Iran was in danger of turning into a long, drawn-out war of attrition spooked investors and pushed indices lower. Tech stocks were again among the biggest fallers over spending on AI with Amazon down 2.1 per cent and Google-owner Alphabet 3.6 per cent lower. The S&P 500 slid 24.91 points, or 0.3 per cent, to 7,728.20 while the Nasdaq fell 159.91 points, or 0.6 per cent, to 26,445.45. The Dow Jones industrial average was down 184.13 points, or 0.3 per cent, to 53,791.85.

The day's biggest movers

Company	Change
St James's Place	3.2%
Compass Group	2.8%
Endeavour Mining	2.7%
Entain	2.4%
IG Group	2.2%
Prudential	-2.9%
Legal & General	-3.1%
Standard Life	-3.3%
M&G	-3.3%
Spirax Group	-5.6%

THG, maker of Myprotein sports drink, was one of the biggest FTSE 250 losers

NEWS IN BRIEF

Istanbul eclipses Heathrow

Heathrow lost its position as Europe's busiest airport to Istanbul last month despite recording the busiest day of the year so far with 267,000 passengers on July 19 as many schools broke up for summer.

The international airport was Europe's busiest from 1996 to 2019. Having lost the title in 2020 amid Covid travel restrictions, it regained it in 2023 and has held it ever since. Annual figures from Airports Council International show the west London airport had 7.85 million passengers noted as having passed through its four terminals last month. Turkey's Istanbul airport recorded 8.15 million.

Heathrow continues to seek government permission to build a third runway with the airport's owners claiming it would be able to accommodate 150 million passengers a year. Several new airlines began serving the airport last month with ITA Airways, Alaska Airlines and Riyadh Air carrying more than 136,000 passengers in July, with Heathrow claiming "clear demand" for additional capacity.

Thomas Woldbye, chief executive, said: "Expanding Heathrow will help ensure the UK remains home to Europe's leading hub and continues to benefit from the trade, investment and tourism." Cargo traffic also had its busiest day of the year so far, with 5,000 tonnes of cargo passing through the airport on July 12.

Paramount has 'lost plot'

Rob Bonta, the California attorney-general leading a 12-state coalition lawsuit to block the $110 billion Paramount Skydance bid for Warner Bros Discovery, has hit back at boss David Ellison's threat to take Paramount out of the state unless Bonta agrees to talks. Writing on X, Bonta said: "In a span of weeks, Paramount agreed to halt the merger until a court decision or until June 2027, asked for a November trial, and is now back with another attempt to blackmail the state into letting an illegal deal through. Paramount has lost the plot ... It didn't work the first time and it won't work this time."

Car sales in China fall 21%

Car sales in China fell for a tenth month in July amid strong competition and a wider economic slowdown. Total sales of passenger cars fell 21 per cent year-on-year to 1.47 million in July, according to the China Passenger Car Association (CPCA), even as exports rose 88.2 per cent to 923,000. Chinese carmakers have been expanding rapidly across Europe, piling pressure on giants such as Volkswagen and Stellantis with cut-price electric models. Electric vehicle and plug-in hybrid exports from China rose by 147.8 per cent year-on-year last month as sales at home fell 3.9 per cent.

Smithfield faces lean spell

The world's largest producer of pork has downgraded its sales and profit forecasts to reflect a "challenging external environment", despite second-quarter sales slightly beating Wall Street's expectations. Smithfield Foods, which makes packaged meats and fresh pork sold under brands including Eckrich and Nathan's Famous, blamed cautious consumer spending and higher input costs for its decision to lower its adjusted operating profit guidance to between $1.23 billion and $1.38 billion, down from $1.33 billion to $1.48 billion. Revenues at the Virginia-based firm fell 3.2 per cent to $3.7 billion.

Business

EQUITY PRICES

Dividend yields Please note dividend yields are supplied by ICE Data Services. The yield is the sum of a company's annual 12-month dividend payments divided by the last day's closing share price.
12-month high and low High/low prices for UK equities and investment trusts are based on intra-day figures.

Automobiles & Part

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
86¾	33¾	Aston Martin Lag	34⅞	- ⅛	...	-0.7

Banking & Finance

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
265	177½	**Aberdeen Group**	249¼	- 1	5.9	11.5
1¼	0⅝	Acuity RM♦	0⅝		...	-3.4
4006	2624	**Admiral**	3720	- 78	3.9	15.1
662½	414⅜	AJ Bell	610	+ 2	2.4	23.8
28761⅛	22372¾	AON Corp‡	26551⅜	+ 132	0.9	...
1130	799	Arbuthnot♦	810	- 20	6.8	7.4
276½	145⅞	Ashmore Group	224⅝	+ ¾	7.5	18.5
2126½	1497⅜	Australia & NZ	1914⅝	- 23	5.9	18.8
717⅜	590⅝	**Aviva**	697	- 10	5.6	25.9
1121⅞	677	Banco Santander	1094	+ 2	1.5	14.1
554⅛	352⅞	**Barclays‡**	516	- 2	2.2	11.8
17½	4	Blue Star Capital♦	4¼		...	-2.2
710	613	BP Marsh & Ptnrs♦	690	+ 14	5.3	5.2
363⅜	212	Bridgepoint Grp	345	+ 4⅜	2.8	69.0
352	264⅝	Chesnara	334	- 6	6.7	-66.1
492	349	City of London Grp	485	- 1	6.8	16.3
563½	318⅜	Close Bros	421¼	- 3¼	...	-6.3
753	203	CMC Markets‡	700	+ 8	2.0	25.5
2957⅝	2057	Deutsche Bank	2834⅝	+ 2¾	3.0	10.5
93	74	EFG-Hermes Hldgs	74	+ ⅛	0.9	...
240¼	136	EPE Special Opps♦	211		...	8.7
85	52	Fiske♦	67½		1.7	5.9
92	80	Foresight Ventures VCT	83		4.3	15.5
4700	2215	Georgia Capital	4410		...	2.7
57	43¼	Hansard Global	52		8.6	40.0
230	194	Helios U/W♦	223		4.5	7.7
1904	1257⅛	**Hiscox**	1780	- 27	2.2	13.3
1610	928⅛	**HSBC**	1524¼	- 2¼	3.6	17.0
1956	1016	**IG Group**	1390	+ 30	3.1	9.6
204	90⅞	Impax Asset Mgmt♦	112	- ¼	8.9	7.0
2340	1424⅞	**ICG**	2052	+ 20	4.2	12.3
145¾	115⅝	Intl Public P'ship	143	+ ¼	6.1	-12.6
690	499⅜	**Investec**	670	- 6	5.7	8.7
76	60	Investment Co	76	+ 1	...	...
73¾	48	IP Group	71¼	+ 1	1.8	9.8
24	6½	Jarvis Securities♦	8		43.8	2.5
214½	113⅜	Jupiter Fund Mgmt‡	161		3.7	8.4
700	549	Lancashire Hldgs‡	588½	- 4½	2.8	6.6
318⅛	217¼	**Legal & General**	301⅝	- 9⅝	7.3	30.2
13190	6905	**Lion Finance Group**	12630	+ 130	2.5	8.9
385	223	Liontrust Asset Mgmt	313	+ 9½	6.1	20.3
61	35	Livermore Invs Grp♦	37⅜	- ½	8.4	16.8
117⅞	77⅜	**Lloyds Banking‡**	113¾	- ⅞	3.5	16.3
22	14	LMS Capital	15½		25.8	...
10140	6684	**London Stock Exchange**	8806	- 32	1.8	36.9
367⅛	247	**M&G**	350⅜	- 12	5.9	27.8
327¼	154¼	Man Group‡	312¾	+ 2¾	4.1	27.4
39¾	20	Manx Financial Grp♦‡	24		2.1	4.4
10	1¼	Marechale Capital♦	4⅝	- ⅜	...	-14.4
185⅝	98¼	Metro Bank	173	- ⅝	...	22.2
2621¼	1864⅝	National Australia	2158⅞	+ 5½	4.1	18.7
726	500¼	**NatWest Group**	707⅜	- 4⅜	4.9	13.2
842⅝	438⅜	PayPoint	599	+ 2	6.6	10.1
1238	910¼	**Prudential**	1012½	- 30	1.9	8.9
1¼	0⅜	Quantum Blockchain♦	0⅜		...	-2.0
209	150¾	Quilter	199¾	+ 1⅜	3.2	22.4
2500	1580	Rathbones Group	1702	+ 8	5.9	15.8
325	245	Rockwood Strategic	318	- 2	...	0.0
2458½	1620	S & U	1945	- 40	5.9	10.0
3	0¼	Sancus Lending♦	1⅛		...	7.2
59⅛	42¼	Schroder REIT	44⅞	+ ⅛	8.0	...
599½	358⅝	**Schroders‡**	582½		3.8	17.1
1575½	1038¾	**St James's Place‡**	1176½	+ 36½	1.5	11.8
2278	1285	**Standard Chart'd‡**	2218	- 16	2.3	15.3
948½	615	**Standard Life**	902	- 30½	6.1	-191.5
6347⅛	4221⅝	Sun Life Canada	6000	- 114⅝	3.4	...
6¾	2¾	Tavistock Invs♦	3		3.3	2.5
5200	3615	TBC Bank Grp	4848	- 86	5.3	6.8
1¾	0¼	Tern♦	1⅜		...	-1.6
60	40⅛	Time Finance♦	52½	+ ½	...	8.3
0⅜	0⅛	Tooru♦	0¼		...	-2.0
4	1½	Truetide♦	3⅜		...	-6.0
132	77⅛	Vanquis Banking Gp	79½	- ⅜	...	24.8
2800	2000	Volvere♦	2110	+ 30	...	11.2
7239⅝	5453⅛	Wells Fargo‡	6504	+ 30⅝	2.3	...
2275⅜	1635⅝	Westpac Bkg Corp	1866½	+ 1½	4.3	17.8
31¾	23	Worsley Investors	28⅜		...	...
57550	49947¼	Zurich Insurance	53707⅛	- 611⅜	5.1	18.4

Construction & Property

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
380	181	Alumasc♦	221	+ 1	5.0	8.5
6⅝	4½	Aseana Properties	4¾		...	1.2
2½	1¼	Built Cybernetics♦	1⅝		...	-160.0
900	541	Balfour Beatty	865½	+ 5½	1.6	16.5
410¼	235⅜	**Barratt Redrow**	319¼	+ 3¾	5.4	23.5
2890	1715	Bellway	2138	+ 38	3.4	16.1
4442	2796	Berkeley	3556	+ 22	...	10.7
1208	800½	Big Yellow Grp	902½	- ½	5.2	...
460	233	Billington Hldgs♦	417½	- 2½	2.6	40.1
237	133½	Boot (Henry)	155		5.1	8.8
383¾	271⅜	Breedon	348¾	- ¼	4.4	14.4
451⅝	318⅜	**British Land**	435⅝	- 3	5.3	...
2900	2500	Cardiff Property	2750		1.1	20.7
2196	1469⅜	Derwent London	2068	- 18	4.0	...
5½	4⅛	DCI Advisors♦	4⅝		...	-2.7
19½	11	First Property♦	12½		2.0	6.9
75	29	Fletcher King♦	42½		5.3	28.7
62	31¾	Foxtons Group‡	37¼		3.1	8.7
632	407½	Galliford Try Hldgs	620	+ 9	3.2	18.4
394½	241	Genuit Group	288	- 17¼	4.5	15.8
435	221	Gleeson (MJ)	272½	- 3½	4.0	10.1
1047	788⅝	Grafton Grp Units	1035	+ 3¼	3.6	14.7
212½	149½	Grainger	173⅞	+ ⅛	4.8	6.3
377	270	Great Portland Est	352¾	- 1	2.3	0.0
391¾	263⅜	Hammerson	378⅝	+ 5¼	4.8	...
183	116¾	Harworth Group	179⅝	- 1⅜	1.0	61.9
400	225	Heath (Samuel)♦	260	+ 5	5.0	32.5
241	180⅝	Helical	207	+ 1	1.3	42.9
150	87⅝	Ibstock	89½	- ⅞	2.2	...
161½	112	James Halstead♦	131⅝	- 1⅝	6.8	13.6
3518	1238	Keller	3048	- 12	2.7	15.1
8305¼	8057⅜	Kingspan Group	8311⅝		0.6	26.3
726	522½	**Land Securities**	702	- 8½	5.9	...
216¼	175¼	**LondonMetric Prop**	193	- ½	6.5	...
25⅝	4¾	Macau Prop Opp Fd	6⅛		...	-0.3
209½	124	Marshalls	172⅛	+ 3	4.1	30.2
107	66	Michelmersh Brick♦	74½		6.2	18.5
1	0⅜	Mindflair♦	0⅜		...	-1.3
5730	3915	Morgan Sindall	4450	- 2	3.7	12.0
10200	8350	Mountview Estates‡	8750	- 50	6.0	16.8
85	65¾	NewRiver REIT	81⅜	- ¼	8.2	...
234	160	Palace Capital	180	+ 4	8.3	40.0
320	261	Panther Securities♦	296		4.1	12.1
1552	947⅜	**Persimmon**	1163	+ 19½	5.2	13.0
24	15	Plaza Centers	14½		...	-0.1
109⅝	87⅜	Primary Health Props‡	94⅞	- ¾	7.7	...
33⅜	28	Real Estate Inv♦	30⅞		4.9	-61.8
849½	578¾	Safestore	620½	+ 4	5.0	...
1126	791½	Savills	974	+ 1	3.5	18.7
5½	0¼	Secure Prop Dev & Inv♦	0½		...	-0.1
997⅜	603	**Segro‡**	952	+ 7⅜	3.3	...
160⅛	124⅛	Shaftesbury Capital	145	- ⅜	3.0	7.8
12⅜	6¾	SIG	8⅝		...	-1.6
153	105	SigmaRoc♦	132⅞	+ 1⅛	...	18.3
113	86¾	Sirius Real Estate	97¼	- 1¼	5.6	7.5
140	106	Smart (J)	112½		2.9	8.6
23¾	16	Steppe Cement♦	22		...	19.7
116⅞	74⅛	Taylor Wimpey	84½	+ 1⅝	4.9	30.2
140	104	Town Centre	132	+ 2½	3.8	...
723½	493⅜	Travis Perkins	661	- 6½	1.7	-7.9
175	132¼	**Tritax Big Box**	162¾	- ⅞	5.1	...
751	442¼	Unite Group	525½	- 1½	7.2	...
746⅜	220	Vistry Group	257¼	+ 8¼	...	6.1
434⅜	312	Workspace Group	363	+ 1¾	7.2	...
920	730	Wynnstay Props♦	895		3.2	12.5

Consumer Goods

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
229	98	AEP Plantations	174¼	- 1¾	3.5	10.2
30	17⅝	Airea♦	26½		3.8	10.4
2359	1729½	**AB Foods**	2073	- 10	3.0	14.6
715⅜	589	Barr (AG)	606	+ 2	3.1	14.3
5326	3677	**British Amer Tob‡**	4202	- 26	5.8	12.0
1376½	976	**Burberry Group**	1170	- 1	...	...
181¼	85⅜	C&C Group	98¼	+ ⅞	5.0	...
5⅞	2¾	Capital Metals♦	4¼		...	-35.5
460	271	Churchill China♦	390		5.4	9.8
5195	3270	**Coca-Cola HBC**	4614	- 110	2.2	20.9
1515¾	821	Colefax♦	1455		0.4	10.3
5810	4775	Cranswick‡	5200	- 50	2.2	17.6
2142	1295½	**Diageo**	1766	- 26	2.1	30.5
0¼	0	Distil♦	0		...	-0.5
1918	1160	Evans (M.P.)♦	1650	+ 18	3.6	10.2
151½	114½	Fevara	142	+ 4	1.7	6.1
23540	14070	**Games Workshop**	19230	+ 270	3.0	30.8
2185⅜	1028⅝	Glanbia	2067¾	+ ⅛	1.8	38.2
307½	191⅛	Greencore	263¼	- 1⅜	1.0	19.9
79¾	4⅝	Headlam	10⅜	- ¾	...	-0.1
861	447⅞	Hilton Food	615		5.7	7.0
3632	2613	**Imperial Brands**	2628	- 36	6.3	10.5
7646⅜	5567¾	Kerry Group	7023½	- 153¼	1.8	20.5
170	106¼	McBride	163⅝	- 1⅝	1.8	8.4
195	85	Mulberry Group♦	190	+ 15	...	-14.6
1275	880	Nichols♦‡	1055	- 5	3.7	18.0
374	252	Norcros	328	+ 3	3.4	...
379	309	Origin Ents♦	366		4.0	8.6
1	0¼	PACSCo♦	0⅜		...	-0.0
138	47⅛	Portmeirion♦	50		...	-1.1
1½	0½	Provexis♦	1⅛		...	-56.2
114	65⅛	PZ Cussons	110	- 1⅝	3.4	23.4
138	88	REA	110	- 1	...	-212.3
213¾	155	Tandem♦	188½	- 1	1.6	12.2
330	220	The Character Grp♦	315		2.2	-46.7
10	5	Ukrproduct Grp♦	6½		...	-15.1
5542⅛	3644	**Unilever‡**	4606½	- 30½	3.6	12.5
92⅞	19½	Victoria♦	59	+ ¾	...	-0.2

Engineering

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
59⅛	10	Assoc Brit Eng	20		...	-6.9
2180	1458	Avon Technologies‡	1934	+ 20	1.0	74.9
1527	902⅜	**Babcock**	1191	+ ½	0.6	28.3
2360	1529	**BAE Systems**	2230	- 14	1.7	32.4
1500	500	Braime A N/V♦	1200		1.4	6.4
2295	1376	Braime Group♦	2350		0.7	12.5
550	350	Caffyns‡	400	- 40	2.5	-9.8
0½	0⅛	Cap XX Ld♦	0⅛		...	-3.6
340	202¼	Castings‡	308	+ 12	6.0	17.7
27	12⅜	Checkit♦	21		...	-8.1
650¾	446½	Chemring Group	636½	- 1½	1.3	35.8
55	28⅛	Chesterfield Spec Cyl♦	34½		...	-38.3
1538	881⅛	Cohort♦	1382	+ 10	1.3	26.5
534⅝	171	Dialight	520		...	...
15	5¾	Feedback♦	6		...	-0.2
1270	463⅛	Gooch & Housego♦	1220	+ 5	1.1	89.1
28500	9020	Goodwin	20150	+ 150	1.4	61.6
4902	3194	**Halma‡**	3718	- 12	0.7	37.7
3150	1951¾	Hill & Smith	3085	+ 25	1.7	30.0
2¾	1	Image Scan♦	2⅝		...	-12.4
3162	2216	**IMI**	3124	- 18	1.1	25.1
7000	3480	Judges Sci.♦	4200		2.7	50.8
90	34	LPA♦	82½		...	-31.2
685	409⅞	**Melrose**	487⅜	- 2	1.5	16.8
261	179¾	Morgan Advanced	253½	- 1½	4.8	33.8
405	200	Mpac♦	330		...	-10.4
1800	1120	MS Intl♦	1585		1.6	23.5
3318	1682	Oxford Instruments‡	2922	+ 40	0.8	34.5
2413⅜	1779⅛	Phillips Elec	2004½	+ 18⅛	3.6	-46.9
4⅛	1	PipeHawk♦	2⅛		...	-3.0
5490	2915	Renishaw	5270	+ 20	1.5	45.7
1586	990	**Rolls-Royce‡**	1533	- 7	0.7	22.1
489¼	286⅜	Rotork	486⅜		1.7	35.2
105	60	SDI Group♦	90	- 1	...	19.1
318⅛	161	Senior	292½		0.7	-286.8
2037½	2013⅜	SKF Group	2025½		3.0	30.2
2754⅛	2088	**Smiths**	2642	- 34	1.8	30.8
215	135	Solid State♦	186		1.5	25.8
245	170	Somero Enter♦	240	+ 7½	3.2	17.1
8050	5950	**Spirax Group**	7225	- 425	2.4	32.6
7½	3½	Tanfield♦	4½	+ ½	...	-4.4
320	240	Thorpe FW♦	259	+ 5	2.8	11.9
142¾	47	Transense Tech♦	48½		...	5.2
507½	350	Vesuvius	403	- 2¾	5.9	19.1
710	325	Volex	566	+ 9	0.8	21.7
3580	2254	**Weir**	2730	- 28	1.5	28.5
2060	843	XP Power	1796	+ 20	...	-42.8

Health

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
284½	187	Advanced Medical♦	281½	+ ½	1.0	60.9
12⅛	5	Allergy Therapeutics♦	5¼	- ¼	...	-6.2
8	0⅞	CelLBxHealth♦	1⅜		...	-0.2
580	377½	Anpario♦	515		2.4	12.8
15732	9892	**AstraZeneca‡**	11844	- 146	2.0	24.2
3¾	1⅝	Cambridge Nutri Sci♦	1⅞		...	2.6
259¼	193	**Convatec**	234¼	+ ⅝	2.4	36.8
36	20	Potter & Moore♦‡	23½		2.3	7.7
116⅞	72	Eco Animal Health♦	97		...	29.8
32	21¾	EKF Diagnostics♦	25⅛	- ⅜	...	53.4
10½	0¼	Futura Medical♦	0⅜		...	-0.1
3228¾	1943	Genus	2296	- 22	1.4	78.4
2282	1288⅝	**GSK**	1896	- 31½	3.7	13.4
0¼	0⅛	Gunsynd♦	0⅛		...	-2.1
416⅛	274⅜	**Haleon**	365⅜	+ ¼	2.0	19.6
1865	1187	Hikma Pharma	1638	- 11	3.9	12.2
266	150½	Hutchmed China♦	183½	- 6½	...	4.7
19⅜	1⅜	ImmuPharma♦	3¾		...	-10.0
32	12¼	Inspiration Health♦	18½		...	-15.9
15	6¼	IXICO♦	7¼	- ¾	...	-3.9
1	0⅜	Thalia Therapeutics♦	0⅝		...	-4.0
77⅝	53⅞	NIOX Group♦	64⅝	+ 1⅝	2.4	38.2
131.50	95.83	Novartis	CHF 125.86	- 0.94	2.9	41.7
962	423½	Oxford Biomedica	487	+ 8½	...	-18.1
0¾	0¼	Physiomics♦	0½		...	-2.6
4⅜	1¼	Proteome Sciences♦	1¾		...	-1.7
6522⅞	3664	**Reckitt Benck‡**	5284		4.1	11.3
27	10⅜	RUA Life Sci♦	24½		...	-105.2
29	9½	Sareum Holdings♦	23½	+ ½	...	-9.8
1441½	1050	**Smith & Neph**	1108	+ 2½	2.7	20.8
256½	140¾	Spire Healthcare	230	- 3	0.7	56.1
14	5	Talisman Metals♦	6¼		...	1.8
0⅞	0⅛	ValiRx♦	0⅛		...	-0.3

Industrials

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
79⅞	58⅛	Accsys Tech♦	72⅜	+ 2⅜	...	31.7
4780½	3665⅛	BASF	4385⅞	- 15	4.4	28.2
4606¾	2203	Bayer	4191	- 22¼	0.2	-13.3
98⅛	71¼	Coats Group	84¾	- ¾	2.9	19.4
3352	2426¾	**Croda**	3274	- 18	3.4	73.7
460	230	Cropper (James)♦	450	- 4	...	14.6
195⅜	136	Elementis	186¼	+ ¼	1.8	-32.2
110	6¼	Hardide♦	91	- 7½	...	...
3775	2095	International Paper	3050	+ 10	4.5	-7.6
2434	1731⅞	Johnson Matthey	2184	+ 4	3.5	-38.2
1085	660	Mondi	903	- 8¾	1.4	28.3
169⅞	110	Robinson♦	127½		4.7	9.4
993½	597	Swire Pacific	985⅞	+ 9¼	3.8	48.2
12⅜	5½	Symphony Enviro♦	8¼		...	-7.6
124	16¾	Synthomer	103¾	- 8⅝	...	-1.1
2858¼	2026⅝	Takeda Pharma	2595	- 2½	3.7	-57.7
831	515	Victrex	816	- 3	7.3	25.5
430	320	Wynnstay♦	372½	- 2½	4.8	37.7
479⅞	318½	Zotefoams	439	+ ½	1.8	9.5

Leisure

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
451	231	Accesso Tech♦	300	+ ½	...	14.5
260	160	Celtic♦	204	- 6	...	5.7
221⅝	164	Domino's Pizza	200	- ⅝	5.7	13.2
967¼	500⅜	**Entain**	554¾	+ 12¾	3.5	-5.3
69⅛	19¾	Evoke	45½		...	-0.4
52¾	29	Gaming Realms♦	31	- ½	...	15.3
310	210	Heavitree♦	300		2.2	5.5
244	130	Heavitree A♦	225		2.9	4.2
175.70	115.64	**InterCont'l Hotels**	$155.80	+ 0.25	1.2	31.7
301½	223½	Mitch & Butlers	280	- ½	...	9.4
297	129⅜	On The Beach	191⅝	- 1⅜	2.1	34.8
152	86	Rank Group	99¾		3.0	10.5
219⅜	137¼	SSP	211	+ ⅜	2.1	-22.7
0⅝	0¼	Bow Street Group♦	0⅜		...	-0.3
824	530½	Wetherspoon JD	806½	+ 2	1.5	13.4
3302	2098	**Whitbread**	2465	+ 5	3.9	20.0

Media

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
76⅛	51⅛	Aeorema Comms♦	60		4.4	47.7
29	18	Altitude Group♦	23½		...	-94.0
115	70¼	Arcontech Group♦	79½		5.0	11.3
831¼	418⅝	**Autotrader**	528⅝	+ 8⅝	2.2	15.5
690	435	Bloomsbury Pub‡	642	- 1	2.5	19.4
3½		Caledonian Hldgs♦	1⅝	+ ⅛	...	-0.1
60	40	Catalyst Media♦	42½		...	23.1
0⅝	0⅛	Catenai♦	0⅛		...	-3.1
22	9	Ebiquity♦	9⅜		...	-0.9
785½	262¼	Future	329	+ 7¾	5.2	5.2
154	60⅝	GlobalData	85⅞	+ ⅛	1.7	19.5
110	44	IG Design Group♦	99	- 2½	1.0	-0.8
1000	719	**Informa‡**	901¾	+ 11⅝	2.5	...
87⅜	65¾	ITV	70⅞	- ⅞	7.1	12.0
220	98½	ME Group	117	- ⅜	7.2	7.8
0⅛	0⅛	Mediazest♦	0⅛		...	13.8
27	12	Mission Group♦	18		...	-0.8
220¼	139¾	Mony Group‡	202⅜	+ ⅜	6.3	13.2
2341⅜	1624⅜	News Corp A	2117½	+ 15½	0.7	...
2606⅞	1891½	News Corp B	2427⅜	+ 18	0.6	...
439½	217	Next 15 Group♦	322½	+ 5	4.8	-10.8
1337	874¾	**Pearson**	1203½	- 14	2.1	23.4
4½	3	Primorus Inv♦	3⅜		...	5.0
75⅜	40⅛	Reach‡	42¾	+ ½	13.8	-1.0
59	40	React♦	41	+ ½	...	-28.3
3634	1991	**Relx‡**	2608	- 1	2.6	23.2
793	391⅜	Rightmove	484⅝	+ 7⅞	2.2	17.2
270	131	SpaceandPeople♦	137½		...	6.4
131	95⅝	STV Group	105		...	-9.7
470	170½	System1 Group♦	325		1.8	31.2
4778	4682⅜	21st Cent Fox A	4682⅜		0.9	...
3349⅜	3298⅛	21st Cent Fox B	3349⅜		1.3	...
369	230	Wilmington	275	- 7	4.2	21.4
412⅝	218½	WPP	402⅜	+ 11½	3.7	8.0
71½	40	Zinc Media♦	57½		...	-5.6

Natural Resources

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
0⅛	0	ADM Energy#	0		...	1.2
17⅞	8⅛	H-Power♦	10⅞	+ ⅜	...	-4.5
89⅜	36¾	Afentra♦	72¾	+ 9¼	...	-70.2
0	0	Arkadian Strat Metals♦	0		...	-1.1
0¼	0⅛	Alien Metals♦	0⅛		...	-12.9
2⅞	1	Aminex	1⅛		...	-12.9
8924	3349⅞	Anglo Amer Plat	6628	+ 26¾	6.9	24.7
4239	2115	**Anglo Amer**	4021	- 21	0.7	-16.4
435	155	Anglo Asian Mng♦‡	415	+ 2½	0.7	36.2
4475	2013	**Antofagasta**	4025	+ 9	1.2	40.3
1¼	0⅜	Arc Minerals♦	0⅝		...	-1.2
2⅜	1¼	Ariana Resources♦	1½		...	-145.0
0⅞	0¼	Arkle Resources♦	0¾		...	-11.0
2¼	0⅞	Asiamet Resources♦	1⅝		...	-13.3
1094	459½	Atalaya Mine	994½	+ 2½	1.0	19.1
4¾	2½	Beacon Energy♦	3		...	-0.7
13	4	Beowulf Mining♦	10½	+ ½	...	-3.1

PRICES

Major indices

New York	
Dow Jones	53,791.85 (-184.13)
Nasdaq	26,445.45 (-159.91)
S&P 500	7,728.20 (-24.91)
Tokyo	
Nikkei 225	66970.22 (nc)
Hong Kong	
Hang Seng	25652.82 (-284.67)
Amsterdam	
Amsterdam AEX	1116.77 (+3.42)
Sydney	
Australia AO	9443.70 (+19.60)
Frankfurt	
DAX	26391.42 (+67.54)
Singapore	
Singapore Straits	5754.17 (+55.74)
Brussels	
Brussels BEL20	5719.41 (-48.37)
Paris	
Paris CAC	8714.94 (-11.09)
Zurich	
Zurich SMI	14575.25 (-58.45)
Zurich DJ Euro Stoxx 50	6551.22 (+15.60)
London	
FTSE100	10844.19 (-18.31)
FTSE250	24799.75 (+55.21)
FTSE350	5912.57 (-7.45)
FTSE Eurotop 100	5126.92 (+2.64)
FTSE All Share	5847.90 (-7.39)
FTSE Non Financials	6406.38 (+1.24)
TechMark Focus	9617.05 (+27.13)
US$	1.3509 (-0.0011)
Euro	1.1704 (-0.0001)
SDR	0.9888 (-0.0004)
CPI Jun (2015=100)	142.5
RPI Jun (1987=100)	416.5
RPIX Jun (1987=100)	409.7

London Financial Futures

	Period	Open	High	Low	Sett	Vol	Open Int
Long Gilt	26-Sep	86.85	87.39	86.33	87.24	250694	1327265
	26-Dec	86.7	87.28	86.6	87.19	146	2017
	27-Mar				87.11	0	
3-Mth Sonia Index	26-Jun	96.2525	96.2525	96.25	96.2525	8006	400428
	26-Sep	96.135	96.16	96.125	96.155	92966	427476
	26-Dec	95.915	95.965	95.89	95.96	112310	536998
	27-Mar	95.75	95.82	95.72	95.815	84649	389241
3 Mth Sonia Index	27-Jun	95.67	95.76	95.64	95.75	77382	388460
	27-Sep	95.65	95.745	95.615	95.735	65938	244880
	27-Dec	95.67	95.765	95.63	95.75	67699	292977
3-Mth Euribor	26-Sep	97.41	97.415	97.4	97.41	127430	665435
	26-Dec	97.25	97.265	97.23	97.26	124973	951638
	27-Mar	97.125	97.16	97.105	97.15	120254	481083
	27-Jun	97.065	97.11	97.045	97.1	99334	483087
	27-Sep	97.045	97.1	97.025	97.09	96739	439947
3-Mth Saron Index	26-Jun				100.0475	336	70603
	26-Sep	100.04	100.045	100.04	100.045	1705	75324
	26-Dec	99.97	99.99	99.965	99.99	5468	52250
	27-Mar	99.865	99.89	99.85	99.89	4764	35337
	27-Jun	99.765	99.795	99.745	99.795	4883	25158
	27-Sep	99.685	99.72	99.665	99.72	2812	26608
	27-Dec	99.635	99.66	99.605	99.66	2773	20318
FTSE100	26-Sep	10862	10899	10826.5	10852	40968	475422
	26-Dec	10915	10915	10915	10920	1	799
FTSEurofirst 80	26-Sep				8905.3	0	
	26-Dec				8951.5	0	

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Commodities

Natural Gas $
2.754 -0.04

Light Crude Oil
83.24 +1.11

Crude Oils ($/barrel FOB)

WTI SEP 26	83.3	1.17
WTI OCT 26	81.92	0.76
WTI NOV 26	80.34	0.42
WTI DEC 26	78.57	0.08
WTI JAN 27	77.18	0.01

Products

Fuel Oil	479.943	17.662
Euro Naphtha CIF NWE	747.242	30.127

ICE Futures

Gas Oil

Aug1338.25-1337.25	Dec1061.75-1061.25
Sep1228.25-1227.75	Jan1024-1023.5
Oct1173.5-1173	
Nov1117.75-1117.25	Volume: 304666

Brent

Oct88.84-88.83	Jan82.69-82.67
Nov86.61-86.59	Feb81.34-81.31
Dec84.43-84.42	Volume: 780406

Cocoa

Sep4060 -194	Sep4174 -184
Dec4096 -194	Dec4127 -185
Mar4200 -194	Mar4200 -194
May4211 -188	May4211 -188
Jul4211 -185	Volume: 35355

Robusta Coffee

Sep3794 -12	May3719 -2
Nov3790 -5	Jul3722 +19
Jan3770 -3	
May3719 -2	Volume: 31379

White Sugar

Oct509.4 +3.3	Aug498.7 -3.3
Dec507.9 +1.8	Oct491.4 -6.1
May507.4 -0.9	
May507.4 -0.9	Volume: 37261

London Grain Futures

LIFFE Wheat (close £/t)

Nov197.25 -1.25	May203 -2.75
Jan 200.75	Jul 208.25
Mar203.25	Volume: 12308

High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
0⅞	0	Bezant Resources♦	0⅛		...	10.5
3495	1918	BHP Group	3334	-17	3.1	25.3
14	7⅝	Border & Sthn Pet♦	10⅝	-¼	...	-89.5
122½	10½	Bougainville	10¾		...	-16.0
609⅜	399⅜	**BP**	535⅞	+11¼	4.6	...
0	0	Buccaneer Energy♦	0		...	-0.6
8¼	1¾	Cadence Minerals♦	4⅝	-⅜	...	-8.8
5½	3	Cadogan Energy	3¾		...	-11.3
2900	1250	Caledonia Mining♦	1650		2.5	7.9
3⅜	1¾	Caspian Sunrise#	1⅞		...	3.5
244	125¼	Cent Asia Metals♦	153	+1	7.8	-4.9
2¼	1⅛	Chariot Ltd♦	1½	-⅛	...	...
0	0	Clontarf Energy♦	0		...	-6.3
0½	0¼	Corcel♦	0⅜		...	-2.1
18½	8	Crism Therapeutics♦	10		...	-2.0
300½	108⅛	DRD Gold	177⅞	+⅞	2.3	15.0
0½	0⅛	ECR Minerals♦	0⅛		...	-2.9
0⅛	0	Empyrean Energy♦	0		...	-0.4
5620	2390	**Endeavour**	4183	+109	3.2	20.2
28	9¾	EnQuest	24⅞	+¾	3.2	...
6	2	Eurasia Mining♦	2⅜		...	15.7
2⅜	0⅝	Europa Oil & Gas♦	1⅞	-⅛	...	-9.5
87¼	27¼	Ferrexpo#	28⅝		...	-4.5
4472	1617	**Fresnillo**	2948	-15	3.8	21.2
80	3	Galantas Gold♦	24½	-½	...	-6.6
12½	2⅞	GCM Resources♦	3⅜		...	-4.9
7½	2½	Gem Diamonds	4		...	-0.1
3⅜	1⅝	Getech♦	3⅛		...	-7.5
707¼	281⅞	**Glencore**	574¼	+5½	2.2	...
0½	0⅛	Geo Exploration♦	0⅛		...	-4.5
4582¾	2310¼	Gold Fields	2986¼	-55⅝	3.9	...
21	6½	Goldplat♦	18	-¼	2.9	30.0
2	0¼	Goldstone Res♦	0⅝		...	-0.9
800	230	Greatland Resources♦	647½	+2½	...	19.5
353¾	176	Griffin Mining♦	290	-3½	...	32.4
235	160⅝	Gulf Keystone	179⅜	+2⅜	7.1	34.8
858	246¼	Hochschild	521½	+7½	0.8	18.1
553	294	Hunting	474½	+23	2.0	24.5
0⅛	0	Ironveld♦	0		...	-2.1
219¾	57⅞	ITM Power♦	111¾	-⅝	...	-15.1
5¼	2¼	Jubilee Metals♦	2⅝	-⅛	...	-3.6
1⅛	0⅜	Karel Diamond Res♦	0⅝		...	-3.9
2⅛	0½	KEFI Gold and Copper♦	1¼		...	-10.8
345	178⅜	Kenmare Res	210	+6	...	-0.8
5⅞	1¾	Landore Res♦	1¾		...	-1.8
0⅛	0⅛	Lansdowne Resources♦	0⅛		...	-1.6
4⅞	2⅝	Lexington Gold♦	2¾	-⅛	...	-28.6
19¼	10¼	Metals Exploration♦	13⅞	+⅛	...	17.9
0⅞	0⅛	Nativo Resources♦	0⅛		...	-0.1
4½	1	Nostrum Oil & Gas	4		...	-0.0
0⅝	0⅛	Oriole Resources♦	0⅜		...	-16.0
		Ormonde Mining			...	...
41	11¼	Orosur Mining♦	14¾	-½	...	...
190⅜	59¾	Pan African Res	111⅛	+1¼	2.0	21.0
33¼	6¾	Pantheon Res♦	13¾	+¾	...	-48.7
27	12½	Parkmead Group♦	20½	-1	...	3.1
22⅝	5¾	Petra Diamonds	5¾	-⅝	...	-0.2
1⅛	0½	Petrel Resources♦	0⅞		...	-4.0
1⅝	0⅝	Petro Matad♦	1		...	-4.7
8⅞	2¾	Plexus Holdings♦	3¾		...	-1.4
938	672	Porvair‡	880	-12	0.8	22.4

High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
5⅛	2⅛	Prospex Energy♦	3⅝	+⅜	...	-5.4
5	0⅞	Quadrise♦	1		...	-6.2
160	35	Reabold Resources♦	62½	-1	...	-781.2
0	0	Red Rock Res♦	0		...	-0.3
10416¼	5324⅛	Rio Tinto Ltd	9406⅛	+52⅜	3.7	17.9
9117	4436½	**Rio Tinto**	7497	-13	4.6	16.5
0½	0⅛	Rome Resources♦	0⅜		...	-15.4
375	184¼	Serabi Gold♦	307½	-4½	1.6	5.8
302⅜	146	Serica Energy♦	246	+6⅝	6.5	-25.6
3758½	2553¾	**Shell**	3356	+58	4.5	15.0
7	2¼	Shuka Minerals♦	2¾		...	-2.0
13	1½	Sound Energy♦	1⅝		...	-1.5
27	5½	Star Energy♦	22	-1	...	-3.9
4½	0⅞	Sunda Energy♦	1⅜		...	-1.4
0	0	Sunrise Resources♦	0		...	-3.2
0		Synergia Energy♦	0		...	0.5
0⅛	0	Tertiary Minerals♦	0⅛		...	-6.5
0⅞	0½	Thor Energy♦	0½		...	-0.6
7066	4293½	Total Eng SE	6544¼	+90¼	4.6	12.8
0	0	Tower Resources♦	0		...	-0.4
19½	3½	Tullow Oil	14¾	+⅜	...	49.7
0	0	UK Oil & Gas♦	0		...	-0.2
13	2⅝	URU Metals♦	4⅛		...	-2.8
0⅜	0⅛	Vast Resources#	0⅛		...	-0.5
9	1⅜	Westmount Energy♦	3⅛		...	-8.3
1½	0½	Xtract Resources♦	1¼		...	-5.4
4⅜	2¼	Zephyr Energy♦	3¼		...	-7.6

Professional & Support Services

High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
5135	2980	4imprint	4890	+2	3.7	16.3
615	464	Andrews Sykes♦	597½		4.3	13.8
130	103½	BTG Consulting♦	106	-1	4.3	20.0
2886	1981	**Bunzl**	2806	-20	2.6	19.9
416	215	Capita	262½	-2	...	-1.8
49⅞	25	CEPS♦	40		...	-11.4
165	90	Christie Group♦	152½		2.3	30.0
2581⅛	2000	**Compass**	2445⅛	+69⅜	2.1	30.0
87	64½	Croma Security♦	70		3.4	12.2
6740	4188	**DCC Energy**	6370	-5	3.4	...
34	15	Diales Grp♦	32		4.7	24.6
7765	4970	**Diploma**	7540	-40	0.8	54.7
840	505	DiscoverIE	818		1.6	27.1
115¼	78⅜	Essentra	111	-¾	1.9	...
3987	2203	**Experian**	2874	-2	1.8	23.6
330	110	FIH Group♦	140	-7½	4.8	-3.4
850	588	Hargreaves Servs♦	800	+4	5.0	8.6
5855	3519⅜	**Intertek**	5840		2.8	26.8
250¾	163½	Int'l Workplace	183⅛	-2⅝	0.6	...
172⅛	123¾	Johnson Service	147	+⅛	3.3	15.8
554	360	Journeo♦	498		...	20.5
254½	178⅝	Kier Group	249¾	+¼	3.1	19.5
1170	910	Latham (J)♦‡	1065	+30	3.4	11.5
3700	2100	London Security♦	3650		2.7	18.8
298	204	LSL Property Servs	254	-5	4.5	15.3
100	59¾	Macfarlane	73¼	-1¾	5.0	18.4
190	65	Maintel Holdings♦	64	-1½	...	-5.4
28	15¼	Malvern Intl♦	21½		...	-2.8
460	310	Mears Group	443½	-4½	4.1	8.0
282¼	101¼	Michael Page	194⅛	+⅛	2.4	66.9
214	134¾	Mitie Group‡	206¼	-¼	2.2	31.2
15¾	0¾	MobilityOne#	6¾		...	-2.1
137	71⅛	Newmark Security♦	110		...	15.6
260	170	Norman Broadbent♦	185		...	5.8
158	84⅞	Northern Bear♦	126½	+3½	5.9	4.2
187½	110	NWF Group♦	151	-2	5.8	8.1

High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
64	42	PCI-PAL♦	63	+2½	...	...
12½	7	Petards♦	10	-¼	...	-14.9
12⅞	7	PHSC♦	7¾		...	-2.6
0¾	0⅛	PowerHouse Energy♦	0¼		...	-3.1
64	41⅜	Record	45¾	+⅝	7.9	11.7
978	772	Renew Holdings♦	912	-4	2.2	14.8
507	329⅝	**Rentokil**	360½	+¼	2.6	26.2
310	222	Restore♦	303	+2	2.4	-64.5
7	1½	River Global A♦‡	2½		...	-0.3
30	13⅝	Roebuck Food Group♦	26		...	-9.0
752½	536⅞	RS Group	731	-4	3.1	21.1
150	85	RTC Group♦	90		7.5	6.4
120	68	RWS Holdings♦	118⅝	+1¼	5.4	-4.4
612	520	Science Group♦	577	-6	1.7	7.7
325¾	212¾	Serco	269⅜	+5¼	1.7	18.7
79⅜	54	Smiths News	71¾	+⅜	7.7	6.1
30	13¼	Software Circel♦	16½	+½	...	-78.6
52½	36⅝	Staffline Group♦	46	+1	...	11.8
289½	132¼	SThree	287	+4½	5.0	20.9
350	146	Synectics♦	200	+5	2.5	9.1
2	0½	Thruvision Group♦	1⅜	+½	...	-1.3
74	46	Tribal♦	64	+⅝	2.0	15.2
84¼	58	Vianet♦	66½	+½	3.6	46.5
490	294½	ZIGUP	466½	-1	5.8	13.8

Retailing

High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
117⅜	82½	AO World	98⅜	-⅛	...	15.5
269¼	140	B&M European	235¾	+4¾	4.1	14.5
115¾	58¼	Card Factory	74¾	-⅜	6.7	8.3
1648	1062	CVS Group	1302	+12	0.7	17.7
204	113	DFS Furniture	157½	-½	0.6	15.0
1248	707	Dunelm	886	-5½	7.9	11.5
840	598	Frasers Group	799	-3	...	9.2
2046	1407¼	Greggs	1892	-11	3.6	15.8
250	123¾	Halfords	242½	+½	3.7	16.0
981	713	**Howden Joinery**	824	-7	2.7	16.7
895	640½	Inchcape‡	827½	-4	4.1	11.4
1⅜	0⅜	Imaging Biometrics	0¾		...	-4.1
106⅛	64	**JD Sports**	92¼	-2	1.3	10.7
372¼	240¼	**Kingfisher**	323¼	+2⅞	3.8	23.1
418⅜	301⅛	**Marks & Spencer**	401¾	-1¾	1.0	31.6
4	0⅝	Mothercare♦	0⅞	-⅛	...	0.8
93¼	61¾	Naked Wines♦	72⅝	+⅝	...	-7.9
15900	11200	**Next**	15585	-45	1.7	20.5
397⅞	140¼	Ocado	220⅝	+7	...	4.7
241⅝	167¼	Pets at Home	208⅜	-⅝	3.6	15.1
575	200	Pinewood Tech Group	430½	+1½	...	89.7
747	175¾	Saga	684	-24	...	...
380¼	292¼	**Sainsbury's**	344½	-6¾	4.0	19.9
1120	378⅝	WH Smith	434¼	-9	...	-3.9
14	4½	Sosandar♦	13		...	92.9
510⅜	408¼	**Tesco**	461½	-7⅛	3.1	16.8
50	30¼	Topps Tiles	35¼	-½	8.8	11.5

Technology

High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
252	140⅜	Alfa Financial	162⅜	+1⅜	5.9	15.9
307	195	Aptitude Software	203	+5	2.7	27.8
129	55	Bango♦	62½	+1	...	-8.6
20	12	BATM Adv Coms	12½	-⅜	...	-4.0
33	19⅞	Berkeley Res	24½		...	-64.2
3¼	1¼	Blackbird♦	1½		...	-2.4
194	74	Celebrus Tech♦‡	104	-2½	3.3	-116.1
28	12½	Cirata♦	13½	-⅛	...	-3.0
0⅜	0⅛	CloudCoCo♦	0⅛		...	0.4
4962	2234	**Computacenter**	4850	-2	1.5	33.1
286	173½	Concurrent Tech♦	245	-2½	0.5	41.8
13½	7½	Corero♦	8¼	-½	...	-111.4
2644	988	Craneware♦	1338	+38	2.5	32.2
110	50	Crimson Tide♦	87½		...	20.8
9⅞	5¾	CyanConnode Hldgs♦	9⅞	+⅛	...	-8.5
15½	8	Dillistone Group♦	11½	+¼	...	-7.9
0⅝	0	Forgent♦	0		...	-0.0
165¾	94½	FDM Group	113¾	+1¾	6.2	21.9
480	114	Filtronic♦	255½	-1½	...	...
265	180⅝	GB Group	236½	+2	1.9	-7.7
51	24	Ilika♦	25	-½	...	-6.2
138	56	Ingenta♦	67		6.7	5.6
178	73	Intercede♦	113½	-3½	...	19.9
28½	11⅛	Iomart♦	13¾	+⅞	...	-1.7
72⅞	4⅝	IQE♦	46⅝	+⅛	...	-12.4
4453½	912⅝	LG Electronics	1458⅜	+1¼	1.7	...
79	37	MTI Wireless♦	62½	-2	3.3	14.4
14¼	2	Nanoco Group	2⅜	-⅛	...	-2.1
138	94⅛	Netcall♦	118		0.8	48.2
36	22	Northamber♦	24½		2.4	-1.7
60⅜	37½	Oxford Metrics♦	39	+½	8.3	-70.9
31	17	Pennant Intl♦	28½	-½	...	-5.7
447	210	Playtech	375⅜	-1¾	...	0.9
50	33⅛	Pulsar Group♦	34		...	-4.3
575½	398½	QinetiQ‡	571½	+8	1.9	28.4
117	88	RM	99⅜	-⅝	...	38.2
6½	2⅜	Seeing Machines♦	5⅛	+⅜	...	-12.4
69½	35½	Shearwater Group♦	61	-½	...	-1.5
2024	1083	Softcat	1981	-14	1.5	29.7
50	5	Sorted Group#	9		...	-0.2
1018½	560½	Tele Ericsson	749⅝	+3¼	3.1	11.3
1181	771⅝	**The Sage Grp**	1039½	-4½	2.2	27.5
91⅝	52½	Touchstar♦‡	82½		3.9	-6.2
435	280	Tracsis♦	327½	+7½	0.8	...
430	230	Triad Group‡	410	+10	2.2	41.3
330	210	Water Intel♦	306		...	14.4
150	96⅜	Xaar	118½		...	-27.6
17	8½	Zoo Digital♦	12¼	+¼	...	-4.4

Telecoms

High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
436¼	206	**Airtel Africa**	324	+1⅝	1.6	23.5
242⅛	173	**BT Group**‡	196	+1	4.2	17.8
169½	106	Currys	160⅜	+⅝	1.9	10.3
1186	687	Gamma Comms	976	+2½	2.3	14.0
247⅝	118	Helios Towers‡	202⅝	+3	0.9	74.0
0⅜	0⅛	Gana Media♦	0⅛		...	-3.3
1920	638	Telecom Plus‡	850	-1	5.9	8.4
131⅛	83⅜	**Vodafone**	118¼	+1½	3.4	-83.9

Transport

High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
260	203⅛	Braemar‡	222	+2	3.2	30.7
5485	3365	Clarkson	4950	+48	2.3	23.1
683¾	332⅝	EasyJet	673⅝	-1⅜	2.0	10.2
237⅝	152⅛	FirstGroup	182¾	-1⅝	3.9	8.5
554	320	Fisher (James)	469	-6	...	-53.9
492⅞	332¾	**Intl Cons Air**	440	+3¾	1.5	7.2
685	458	Irish Cont	665		2.1	16.7
37	17	Mobico Group	25⅞	+½	...	-1.1
7	1⅝	Sutton Harbour♦	4¼		...	-0.4
1453	832	Wizz Air	1078	-4	...	...

Utilities

High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
220¼	151½	**Centrica**	154⅜	+¾	3.7	-102.9
937½	613⅞	Drax Group	740½	+12	4.1	35.8
485	420	Jersey Electricity	435		5.0	12.1
1428½	1000	**National Grid**	1185½	+10	4.1	18.1
606	439⅜	Pennon‡	463¾	-3⅝	6.3	23.9
3335	2381	**Severn Trent**	3082	-16	4.1	25.0
2767½	1597	**SSE**‡	2398	+20	2.9	22.7
1497	1072	**United Utilities**	1409	-6	3.8	16.4

INVESTMENT COMPANIES

High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
4497	1825	**3i Group**	2742	-61	3.1	5.1
394½	325	3i Infrastructure	382½	-1½	3.5	12.0
1758	1408⅛	Aberforth Smlr‡	1730		2.8	27.0
1391	1178	**Alliance Witan**	1386		2.1	74.9
401	321	Artemis UK Future Lead‡	394	-6	3.9	31.9
220	116⅜	Athelney Trust	165		6.1	14.5
273	235⅛	AVI Global	263½	+1	1.7	52.0
194	154½	AVI Japan	169		1.3	57.5
331	263	Baillie Gifford Ch Gr	313	-1	0.8	...
133	91⅜	Baillie Gifford Eur Gr	132½	+6½	0.5	...
1086	811⅛	Baillie Gifford Jpn	1072	+4	0.9	...
174¾	123	Baillie Gifford SN	170¾	-¼	0.4	...
231	180⅛	Baillie Gifford UK Gr	231	+1	2.7	37.1
153⅝	121¾	Bankers Invstmt Tst‡	152⅜	+⅝	1.9	67.7
445	387	BH Macro GBP	427½	+7½	...	20.2
1718	809	Biotech Growth	1700	+4	...	-894.7
289½	197	BlckRck Amer Inc	287	-1	5.2	...
205	118½	BlckRck Eng&Res Inc	183		3.2	52.3
208	162½	BlckRck Fro Inv	191½	-1½	4.0	25.5
625	507	BlackRock Grt Euro	617	+4	1.2	89.6
238	200	BlckRck Inc&Grth‡	230	-1	3.3	31.8
288⅜	230¾	BlckRck Smlr‡	281½	-½	2.8	32.2
1072⅞	543⅛	BlckRck Wld Min	983	-3	2.4	40.8
1665	1274	Brown Adv US Sm	1625	+15	...	-271.3
1584	1336	Brunner‡	1568	+2	1.7	56.3
400	312	Caledonia Inv	400	+7	1.9	51.9
599	486	City of Lon IT‡	593		3.7	27.5
155⅜	86	Crystal Amber Fd	88½		-64.1	...
592	439⅞	CT Priv Eq Ord	500	-8	5.6	...
373	320	CT UK Cap & Inc	360	-4	3.7	29.7
120	92	CT UK HIT B	111	-1	5.4	22.9
126	97	CT UK HIT	118	-6	5.1	24.3
480¼	460	Dunedin Ent#	475		...	...
861	737⅝	Edinburgh IT	855	+1	3.7	32.1
294½	186¾	Edin Wwide	257	+4	...	-231.5
1332	325⅞	**F&C Inv Trust**	344	+2	1.2	76.6
672	546	Fidlty Asian Val	610	+4	3.4	27.1
339	241	Fidelity China Sp	265½	-2½	3.4	28.8
1574	816	FdityEmrgMkt	1434	+22	1.4	62.5
444¾	367½	Fidelity European Trust	443	+1	2.2	39.2
476	372	Fidlty Spec Val	473		2.2	38.5
915	706¼	Fins Gwth & Inc	822	+1	2.5	43.5
85⅝	69⅜	GCP Infrastructure‡	82	+¼	8.5	38.1
370	316	Global Opps Tst	334	+½	3.1	42.8
103	100	Golden Prospect‡	102		-15.2	...
68⅞	57⅛	Greencoat Renew	67⅜	+⅜	-16.8	...
118⅞	92¼	Greencoat UK Wind	114	-½	9.4	-13.1
344	250	Hansa Investment Co‡	338		1.3	76.8
332	244	Hansa Inv Co A‡	324		1.4	73.6
3480	2710	Hbrvest Glbl Pt Eq	3450	+15	...	-58.3
214	173¼	Hend High Inc	208	-2	5.3	18.4
998	769	Hend Smlr	984	-13	2.9	37.7
3290¾	2285	Herald Inv Trust	3035	+5	...	...
524	318⅝	HgCapital Trust	400	+4	1.2	...
141	107¼	HICL Infra	138¼	+¼	6.2	10.0
1611⅜	1288¼	ICG Ent Tr	1488	+8	2.8	-419.2
494¾	379	Impax Env Mkts	442		1.2	89.5
519	368⅜	Invesco Asia Dragon Tr	491	+½	3.9	49.9
178½	150⅛	Invesco Bond Inc‡	170	-½	7.2	13.0
427	318	Invesco Glbl Eq Inc‡	417	-3	3.8	83.2
1258	1041	JPM American	1246		0.9	...
652	393½	JPM Asia Gro & Inc‡	570		5.5	...
313	250½	JPM China‡	274½	-7	4.9	70.6
986	788	JPM Claverhs‡	974	-6	3.7	28.9
310	181⅝	JPM Emrg EMEA Sec	240	-7½	0.2	...
181¼	118⅜	JPM Em Mkts‡	163¼	+1⅜	4.6	71.0
666	548	JPMorgan Euro	630		2.5	34.7
221	145	JPM Em Mkts Div Inc	203		3.0	35.7
641	529⅝	JPM GG&I	635½	-2	3.9	76.8
1098	799	JPM India‡	891	-1	5.0	...
850	656	JPM Japan	841	+1	1.0	82.9
463	365	JPM Smllr Co	449	-½	0.7	...
1290	977⅜	Law Debenture	1268		2.9	34.0
190	143	Lowland Inv	187	-2	3.6	27.8
137¼	137	Marwyn Val Inv‡	138½		15.3	...
289	234¼	Mercantile IT	286½	+1	2.9	31.0
687	536	Merchants Trust‡	680		4.4	22.2
804	682	Mid Wynd	792	-2	1.1	...
1664	1360	Monks Inv Trust‡	1644	+14	0.1	...
189	142	Montanaro Eur Sml‡	177	-2	0.9	91.2
1036	854⅝	Murray Income Trust‡	1008	-6	4.1	26.1
372½	288	Murray Intl‡	368½	-2½	3.5	26.5
437	345	Pacific Assets Trust	421		...	75.2
409	319½	Pantheon Intl	403		...	...
5095	3636	**Pershing Sqr**	3914	+2	1.4	3.8
557⅛	508	Personal Assets	554	-3	1.0	91.9
743½	384	**Polar CapTech**	663½	+3½	...	-789.9
82¼	63¼	Renewables Infra	76½	-⅝	9.9	-14.2
2645	1932	RIT Cap Ptnr	2620	-5	1.7	...
990⅝	490	Riverstone	584	-19	...	-363.5
738	488¾	Schroder TotRt	700	+2	1.6	71.4
892	598	Schrd Asia Pac	827	+10	1.6	62.6
378¾	311⅞	Schrod Inc Gwth	374	-1	3.9	29.8
401	271	Schrod Jap Gwth	390	+1	3.1	56.4
782	652	Schrod UKMid	772	-10	2.9	30.8
17¾	12¾	Schroder UK PP Tr	17	-¼	...	-70.8
572	480⅛	Scot American	570	+3	2.9	36.4
1563	1015¾	**Scot Mortgage**	1424½	+20	0.3	...
88	75½	Sequoia Eco‡	86¾	-⅛	7.9	12.7
253	215⅞	STS Glbl Inc Grwth	229	-4	3.7	35.3
352	196⅝	Temp Emg Mkt	314	+3	1.7	58.3
429½	333	Temple Bar	427	+½	3.7	30.9
198⅝	162¾	The Glbl Smaller‡	194⅝		1.6	66.0
9	0⅜	Potentially AI	6¾		-1.7	...
364½	291	TR Property	312½	-1	5.2	19.8
194½	188	UIL	192½		19.0	...
302	243	Utilico Emerging Mkt‡	285	-5	3.4	21.0
865	682	Vietnam Ent Inv	721	-3	...	4.7
398	306½	Ww Health	390	+1½	0.6	...

♦AIM company; # Price at suspension; † Ex dividend; ‡ Ex scrip; ▲ Ex rights issue; ▼ Ex all; § Ex capital distribution; * figures or report awaited; . . . No significant data. Companies in bold are constituents of the FTSE 100 Index. Investment Cos sector Nav Dis or Prm supplied by ICE Data Services.

Exchange rates

Australia $	1.91346 (-0.00035)
Canada $	1.88123 (-0.00051)
Denmark Kr	8.75068 (+0.00643)
Euro	1.1702 (+0.0004)
Hong Kong $	10.601 (+0.007)
Hungary	426.53 (+0.11)
Indonesia	24047.75 (+44.53)
Israel	4.0516 (-0.0011)
Japan Yen	215.123 (+0.06)
New Zealand $	2.29748 (+0.00292)
Norway Kr	12.82781 (-0.00029)
Poland	5.0328 (+0.00812)
Russia	111.602 (+0.155)
S Africa	21.8991 (+0.06736)
Sweden Kr	12.8564 (+0.03715)
Switzerland Fr	1.09565 (+0.00181)
Turkey Lira	64.5101 (+0.1166)
USA $	1.3512 (+0.0007)

Gold/precious metals

(US dollars per ounce)

Bullion: Open $4388.97

Close $4382.35 **High** $4435.25

Low $4356.877

AM $4372.20 **PM** $4383.35

Platinum $1746.3

Silver $64.9272

Palladium $1368.503

Money rates %

Base Rates Clearing Banks: 3.75%
ECB Refi 2.40%
Fed Fund 3.5-3.75%
Halifax Mortgage Rate (SVR) 7.24%

Sterling spot and forward rates

Mkt Rates for	Range	Close	1 month	3 month
Copenhagen	8.7508	8.7441	-153.22	-420.52
Euro	1.1703	1.1697	-15.59	-42.22
Montreal	1.8813	1.8820	-26.26	-77.07
New York	1.3511	1.3507	-0.61	-0.2
Oslo	12.8274	12.8231	40.38	141.01
Tokyo	215.1450	215.0320	-55.15	-155.72
Zurich	1.0956	1.0939	-38.7	-111.47

Other sterling

Argentine peso	2016.58447-2016.58655
Australian dollar	1.91346-1.91360
Bahrain dinar	0.50820-0.51020
Brazilian real	6.97180-6.97380
Euro	1.17030-1.17110
Hong Kong dollar	10.60100-10.60500
Indian rupee	128.86951-128.94949
Indonesian rupiah	24047.75000-24087.75000
Kuwaiti dinar	0.41660-0.41860
Malaysian ringgit	5.52510-5.52710
New Zealand dollar	2.29770-2.29806
Singaporean dollar	1.72964-1.72998
South African rand	21.90730-21.91660
UAE dirham	4.96230-4.96430

Dollar rates

Australia	1.41580-1.41660
Canada	1.39256-1.39258
Denmark	6.47729-6.47813
Euro	0.86620-0.86660
Hong Kong	7.84653-7.84665
Japan	159.24400-159.25900
Malaysia	4.09000-4.09500
Norway	9.49690-9.49950
Singapore	1.28020-1.28032
Sweden	9.51600-9.51880
Switzerland	0.81103-0.81105

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Horse whisperer and friend of the late Queen
Monty Roberts
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Register

Obituaries

Justin Hardy

Son of the director of The Wicker Man who became a film-maker himself despite his life being scarred by his father's cult classic

In 2021 Justin Hardy was sent a trove of forgotten documents left by his father, the director Robin Hardy, best known for the 1973 cult film *The Wicker Man*. Starring Edward Woodward, Britt Ekland, and Christopher Lee, the folk horror film told the story of a puritanical police officer searching for a missing girl on the fictional Scottish island of Summerisle where the inhabitants practise a form of paganism, memorably culminating in him being burnt to death in a May Day sacrificial ritual inside a giant wicker man.

The film bombed on its release but in the intervening years *The Wicker Man* came to be regarded as a landmark in British cinema, the subject of academic conferences and papers, a 2006 American remake starring Nicolas Cage and Ellen Burstyn, stage and radio adaptations and a Radiohead video.

Inspired by the discovery of the archive, which threw fresh light on the making of *The Wicker Man*, Hardy and his half-brother Dominic decided to write a book and make their own documentary film chronicling the complicated legacy of their father's movie. However, what emerged was a far more personal and poignant story in which they explored their own feelings about their father and how *The Wicker Man* had affected — and indeed scarred — their own lives. "They called it a cult classic, the *Citizen Kane* of horror, one of the best British films ever made," Justin said. "But for me it was always the film that f***ed up my family."

Justin, a historical documentary maker whose 2007 film *The Relief of Belsen* was nominated for a Bafta, was nine when *The Wicker Man* was released to a largely unreceptive cinema audience, and his uncredited voice is heard in the film. "I remember my father calling me and various of my cousins to a sound studio in order to record the voices of the children of Summerisle when Edward Woodward is running around trying to follow the hobby horse," he said. "We were all required to say, 'We bring death into the village', and I remember wondering what we were talking about. But we got a cup of tea and a bun and it was a day out from school."

The making of *The Wicker Man* was troubled in every way. There was friction between Hardy and his screenwriter Anthony Shaffer, trouble with the crew and the financing was precarious. To get *The Wicker Man* made, Justin's mother, Hardy's then wife Caroline, the daughter of a successful businessman, effectively acted as the film's uncredited executive producer, lending her husband the money and bankrupting herself in the process. Her reward was that a year after the film was released, Hardy walked out on his wife and their son Justin and his younger sister Bella and she was forced to sell the family home. Hardy did not see his son and daughter for another five years and never paid back their mother, who died of alcoholism in 1984.

Once a week during their childhood, Justin and his sister would force their mother to detox, locking her in a room without access to alcohol. "You thought it was OK to leave an 11-year-old boy and a nine-year-old girl with an alcoholic?" Justin asked his father rhetorically in his own film, which had the working title *Wickermania!* but was released in 2024 as *Children of the Wicker Man*.

Eventually, after having a heart attack and fearing for his life, Hardy wrote to Justin. In the documentary he read out the letter in which his father apologised for being "a bad-tempered feckless rascal" and expressed his pride in the son he barely knew. However, he refused to fall into the trap of believing "he loved us all really" and suggested his father had piled on the sentimentality "so he could go and have some more sex somewhere else". In the end Robin Hardy fathered eight children with six different women.

It took Justin years to discover the full story behind the family tragedy. "We knew Dad had left our mother and that she had, relatively speaking, died of a broken heart," he told The Times. "What we didn't know was that she had given up money again and again for the cause of *The Wicker Man*." In the documentary he made with his half-brother he put it somewhat more angrily, fulminating that his father had "betrayed our mother and left everything behind in absolute tatters".

Hardy, who died in 2016 at the age of 86, never made any money from *The Wicker Man*, even after it had found acclaim as a classic of its kind. "The bloody film has gone on to make so much money for other people. It's beyond a joke. Dad agreed to take five grand. So he never received any of the upside," his son noted.

For a long time, Justin felt such bitterness that he couldn't watch *The Wicker Man*. Yet at the same time his father's magnum opus, now acclaimed as a masterpiece, continued to have a strange fascination. When he was contacted by the new owner of his former family home who had found six sacks of his father's lost archives hidden in the attic and untouched for decades, his initial reaction was to tell her to "burn the bloody things".

However, he relented, and when he and Dominic opened up the sacks, he was astonished to discover that they included not only storyboards, legal documents, letters and lost creative materials revealing the true story behind *The Wicker Man* but also his father's proposal for a sequel that was never made titled *Wrath of the Gods*. Set in the same disturbed folk horror milieu as *The Wicker Man*, Robin Hardy had planned to shoot the film in Shetland and after much deliberation, Justin decided to realise his father's artistic vision.

Based on his father's draft script and long-lost notes, he worked up the plot involving a grieving young widow returning to a Scottish island to bury her late husband after his suicide, "torn between the ghosts of the past and the gods of the present" before being forced to confront "dark family secrets lurking in the shadows", according to the film's trailer.

As his father had intended, he shot and directed the film in Shetland starring Francis Magee of *Game of Thrones* fame, the Norwegian actress Christiane Schaldemose and with a supporting cast of Shetlanders. Due to have its premiere in London later this month, Hardy dedicated *Wrath of the Gods* to his mother's memory but it now stands as a memorial to his own.

"Justin did an incredibly beautiful job with *Wrath of the Gods*," his half-brother Dominic, an art historian at the University of Quebec, said. "When he showed the final version to me, I said, 'Now you have made a film with a capital F. It is your film. It is your vision'. It settles the legacy of our father, who had invented a massive thing of the same name, but Justin made something humanist, telling an important story."

He is survived by his wife, Larissa, with whom he lived in a converted barn in rural Oxfordshire, and their four children, Sam, Ludo, Nico and Summer.

Justin St Clair Hardy was born in 1964 and educated at his father's alma mater, Bradfield College, where his amorous exploits echoed paternal weaknesses. "I was suspended for making love to an English nanny, so, funny how these things repeat themselves," he said. "But because I was an Oxbridge candidate they chose at the last minute not to expel me for which I am forever grateful."

At Oxford where he read history at Magdalen, David Cameron and Boris Johnson were contemporaries. "*Brideshead Revisited* had just come out and we were absolutely committed to repeating that piece of history, drinking plenty of champagne and thinking that we were Evelyn Waugh," he recalled.

Oxford was followed by film studies at UCLA in southern California and his first film, 1994's *A Feast at Midnight*. A comedy drama set in a boarding school and drawing on his own experiences at Bradfield, it featured Christopher Lee, Robert Hardy, Edward Fox and another Oxford contemporary, Michael Gove, who played the school chaplain. Hardy described the future cabinet minister's performance as "comedy gold".

He went on to direct historical films and documentaries for the BBC, Channel 4 and CNN, including *Princes in the Tower, Trafalgar Battle Surgeon, Spanish Flu: The Forgotten Fallen* and *Captain Webb*, recounting the story of the first man to swim the English Channel. He also taught screenwriting at University College London.

Despite the ruinous impact the film had on his family, he came to admire *The Wicker Man* as a groundbreaking landmark in British cinema. "Not only have I made peace with it but as a film-maker myself I can see the radicalism," he told The Times in 2026. "I can see what previously looked like quite bad choices are really interesting choices and I'm proud that I've got a radical for a dad."

Justin Hardy, film-maker and academic, was born on October 30, 1964. He died of a heart attack on July 31, 2026, aged 61

VIANNEY LE CAER/SHUTTERSTOCK EDITORIAL

Justin Hardy, right, and his half-brother Dominic at an anniversary screening in 2023; left, their father Robin Hardy, right, with the producer Peter Snell, left, and screenwriter Anthony Shaffer; below, Christopher Lee as Lord Summerisle in The Wicker Man

His father's lost archives were found in the attic of his former home

Register

Monty Roberts

Horse whisperer who won over sceptics of his non-violent training methods and forged a deep friendship with Queen Elizabeth II

DAN TUFFS/GETTY IMAGES

Roberts, at his ranch in 2005, was once described as a "hybrid of gentle James Herriot and straight-talking John Wayne"

One day in 1988 Monty Roberts received an unexpected message. Queen Elizabeth had read about the 53-year-old Californian horse trainer in magazines and was keen to meet him. A stunned Roberts duly received an invitation to Windsor Castle to demonstrate his non-violent methods.

He arrived in April the following year while the Queen was having lunch with Mikhail Gorbachev amid intense security, with armed guards patrolling the ramparts. There was also a cold war of sorts in the stables, with grooms standoffish towards the American cowboy who would later be dubbed a real-life horse whisperer for his unconventional method of "breaking in" horses based on subtle body language signals.

After admiring the four-legged royal collection, Roberts examined the round wire-mesh pen that he had arranged to be delivered to the riding school so he could illustrate his technique to an audience that included the Queen, Prince Philip and the Queen Mother. He met the Queen, who glanced at the cage and joked that it bore a resemblance to a circus lion-tamer's equipment: "It appears to be the sort of thing you need a whip and a chair to enter with."

Whips and other pain-inflicting instruments common in the American west of his youth were out of the question for Roberts, who communicated with horses using a non-verbal language he called Equus, emphasising gentle gestures, eye contact and respect as he sought to "join up" with young horses, gaining their trust so he could saddle up and ride them for the first time. While others talked of "breaking" horses, Roberts explained that he could "start" them in 30-odd minutes rather than three or four weeks.

He was tasked with "starting" a young thoroughbred filly owned by the Queen Mother. Though he was almost as nervous as the steed, he persuaded the skittish horse to accept a rider in about 25 minutes, then broke royal protocol by giving an emotional Queen Mother a hug.

Doubts quelled for the most part — some traditionalists and sceptics questioned his tactics throughout his career — and royal support secured, Roberts and the Queen became friends. He said that they met frequently and spoke more than two hundred times on the telephone. The royal connection opened international doors and he embarked on tours of Britain and Ireland. Roberts found Elizabeth to be deeply concerned about equine welfare. "She believed that no one should ever say to any human being or animal, 'You do what I tell you to do, or I'll hurt you,'" he told The New York Times in 2022. On one occasion when he was invited to Windsor they took tea on the lawn, ordered via a button at the end of a cable that signalled to staff indoors that the monarch was ready for refreshments.

At the Queen's insistence, Roberts said, he published his 1996 autobiography, *The Man Who Listens to Horses*. It has sold about six million copies worldwide. In print and interviews the affable, sentimental but practical Roberts came across, as one reporter put it, as a "hybrid of gentle James Herriot and straight-talking John Wayne". The timing was also a publicist's dream given the surge in interest in so-called natural horsemanship when *The Horse Whisperer*, the 1995 debut novel by the British author Nicholas Evans, became a smash hit. Primarily inspired by the American trainer "Buck" Brannaman, the book was turned into a 1998 film directed by and starring Robert Redford.

Humans, Roberts contended, are "fight animals" who seek to establish dominance, while horses are instinctively fearful "flight animals". To bridge that gap he emphasised effective communication and compassionate contact. "In short," he wrote, "instead of telling young horses 'you must', I wanted to ask them a question, 'Will you?'" A horse, he believed, should be a friend, not a slave.

Of Welsh descent, Marvin Earl Roberts Jr was born in 1935 in Salinas, California — Steinbeck country — to Marvin and Marguerite, who bred horses and ran a riding school at the local rodeo grounds. Monty could walk, trot and canter a horse and perform manoeuvres from the age of three, and gained renown when he won an under-16s competition at the age of four. He then became a child stunt double in Hollywood films. He studied animal science at California Polytechnic State University. Dreams of a professional American football career were scuppered by a knee injury but he became a rodeo champion, dry-fly fishing in his spare time.

In 1956 he married Pat (née Burden), whom he had known since high school. A sculptor and horsewoman who worked by his side, she survives him along with two daughters, Debbie, who runs the family business, Laurel, an equine facility designer and consultant, and a son, Marty, a former professional bull-rider. Roberts said that he and Pat also raised 47 foster children over 35 years.

In his 1996 book he wrote that trips to Nevada as a teenager were transformative as he learnt the "silent language" of horses by observing wild mustangs. Also pivotal, he wrote, was the cruelty of his father. Roberts said that his father dealt brutal beatings to both him and their horses, deepening his resolve to pursue an alternative path. This was disputed by several family members including Roberts's late brother, Larry, a former professional rodeo competitor. Roberts rejected accusations that parts of his book were, as one newspaper headline put it, "unbridled fiction".

In the mid-Sixties, he was hired to establish a large thoroughbred facility near Santa Barbara, Flag Is Up Farms. Among his greatest successes was Alleged, bought as a yearling and sold at a considerable profit to the racing titan Robert Sangster. Trained by Vincent O'Brien in Ireland, Alleged won the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe in 1977 and 1978 with Lester Piggott (obituary, May 29, 2022) in the saddle.

In later life Roberts continued to oversee what became the family's equine centre and promoted his philosophy and his brand, embarking on tours around the world, teaching courses and writing more books, including a self-help guide, *Horse Sense for People*.

In 2011 he was made an honorary Member of the Royal Victorian Order for "services to Her Majesty's racing establishment". In another, more informal tribute, the Queen named one of her corgis after him. Monty the dog appeared alongside the sovereign in the James Bond sketch for the opening ceremony of the 2012 Olympic Games. That year the Queen became a patron of Roberts's charitable organisation, Join-Up International, which seeks to promote his non-violent principles, also applying them to military veterans and first responders dealing with trauma.

Roberts attended the Queen's state funeral in 2022 and their relationship was explored in a 2023 documentary film, *The Cowboy and the Queen*. "In no way could I have reached the entire world without the endorsement of Queen Elizabeth II," he reflected. "She completely changed my life."

Monty Roberts MVO, horse trainer, was born on May 14, 1935. He died of complications from an autoimmune disease on July 31, 2026, aged 91

Clara Ester

Civil rights activist who abandoned her militant tendencies after trying in vain to save Martin Luther King's life in Memphis

Ester graduating in 1969; by chance she witnessed King's assassination

Early on the evening of April 4, 1968, Clara Ester, a 20-year-old black student, drove with a friend to the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee. She did so less to see Martin Luther King, the great civil rights leader who was staying there, than to enjoy the special it was offering for dinner that night. "I just wanted some catfish," she said.

Ester never ate the special. At 6pm she was standing in the motel's car park and looking up at the man she called her hero and "our hope" as he greeted a few wellwishers from the walkway outside his first-floor room. He was "happy as a lark — laughing about stuff", she said. "Just then, we heard a blast like a truck backfiring. It was a gunshot. I saw Dr King thrown up in the air and then back down."

She and her friend rushed up the stairs to the balcony. "He was breathing, but very slowly. I unbuckled his belt to help. His eyes were open. On the side of his head and neck was a pool of blood." She tried to stanch the bleeding with towels, but to no avail. "I guess because he'd just been involved in such pleasant conversation, there was a most comfortable, relaxed expression on his face," she recalled nearly 50 years later.

Except for Andrew Young, who later became the US ambassador to the United Nations, Ester was believed to be the last surviving witness to King's assassination, and it changed her life. She embraced his creed of non-violent struggle, and spent the next half-century working for racial justice and reconciliation. She regarded King's death as a crucifixion, and her role was to "pick up the cross and carry it".

Clara Jean Ester was born in Memphis in 1948. Her father was a railway worker; her mother a cook and cleaner. She was raised in an era of rigid racial segregation, but her parents managed to shield her from its effects until she was seven. She then witnessed white officials berating her mother for using a bathroom for white people at an empty railway station. "I'd never seen anybody talk to my mother like that. My dad didn't talk to my mother like that. That's when I started seeing the injustices," she said.

She did well at her all-black high school, and gained a place to study elementary school education at an all-black college in Memphis. By her third year — 1968 — she was actively supporting a protracted strike by the city's black rubbish collectors after two of them had been crushed to death in a garbage truck's compactor. Her support consisted of more than marching, picketing and organising student boycotts. On occasion she borrowed her father's car to drive more militant activists to burn down white-owned business premises, and even threw a few Molotov cocktails herself.

Then King arrived in Memphis. The evening before his assassination, she watched him deliver one of his most famous speeches at the all-black Mason Temple church that she attended. "I've been to the mountaintop," he declared. "I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you, but I want you to know tonight that we, as a people, will get to the promised land." Scarcely 24 hours later he was shot by James Earl Ray, a fanatical segregationist.

In the immediate aftermath, the police held Ester and other witnesses at the motel until 1.30am. "Why are y'all questioning us? We didn't do it. Y'all did," she told them in her fury.

She did go on to graduate, but soon after moved to a deprived area of Mobile, Alabama. There she became executive director of a community centre and a deaconess at her United Methodist church.

In 1970 her fiancé was killed in a car crash; she never married. In 1985 she spent months in hospital after her car was crushed by an articulated lorry while she was driving back to Memphis for her father's funeral. A four-year-old boy she adopted in 1981 suffered from severe mental illness as he grew up and had to be institutionalised.

Only towards the end of her life did Ester talk openly about her presence at King's assassination, and how it changed her. One reason was a lack of irrefutable evidence that she really did witness King's final moments. But in 2013, the Memphis Commercial Appeal newspaper published a contemporaneous photograph retrieved from FBI files which demonstrated beyond doubt that Ester was present. "After that," she said, "I felt there was some proof."

Clara Ester, civil rights activist, was born on February 17, 1948. She died of a stroke on July 9, 2026, aged 78

Eve Wilkinson

Probably the last surviving member of the team that coded and decoded Winston Churchill's secret messages in his underground Cabinet War Rooms

In 1942, 20-year old Eve Masters, as she then was, was posted to the War Cabinet office, housed in a series of underground bunkers, close by Downing Street.

Having already been commissioned and subsequently sent on a cypher course, she became part of the team coding and decoding for the prime minister, Winston Churchill. She found him courteous, "in an old-fashioned way". He would stand up whenever one of the female members of the team brought in a message until they left the room. If he was passing by their office, he would always say "Good morning, ladies".

While working in the underground offices, she would know when a bombing raid was taking place as she could feel the tremors and dust would fall down on her. Many of the most secret messages that she passed to the prime minister were, to her, "very exciting", the more so when it was clear that Britain had the ability to decode German messages — although at that time she had no knowledge of the Enigma decoding being carried out at Bletchley Park.

Even 30 years later she was hesitant to talk about what she had handled, but she did reveal that she decoded a message about an experiment in America that was "very new, very secret and very destructive". This was a reference to the atomic bomb.

In September 1944 she sailed on the Queen Mary across to Canada, as part of Churchill's cypher team, for what was called the Quebec Conference. The voyage took ten days. Sometimes they were allowed on deck, but as the ship was constantly zig-zagging to avoid submarines, "as soon as you found a warm spot, the ship changed course and your warm spot was lost".

The Queen Mary arrived at Halifax, in Nova Scotia, whereupon the prime minister and his team travelled by train to Quebec for the conference, attended by the US president Franklin Roosevelt and the Canadian prime minister William Mackenzie King.

Masters found that the contrast between war-torn Britain and life in Canada was huge — it seemed as if no one there had heard about the war. At dinner on their first evening they were served a starter and she assumed that this was the whole meal, as rationing back home made food in short supply. Happily there was plenty more.

Eve Theodora Masters was born in Egypt in 1922, the second daughter of Charles and Marion Walton-Masters. She and her elder sister and brother had what she described as "an idyllic childhood". Her father was a lawyer with the British administration, and in Alexandria they lived the life of an "expat" family abroad, close by the sea, learning French and "kitchen" Arabic.

This all came to an end in 1932, when the marriage broke down and, at the end of their biannual leave back in England, Marion told her that they were not going back to Egypt, nor was their father joining them. At that point Marion had no income and no permanent home, but fortunately her brother, Lew, a solicitor in Wincanton, Somerset, came to their aid, lending them a house in Southbourne, near Bournemouth. This enabled Eve to go to a school called Wentworth, where she excelled at French and history. She was also good at sports, becoming captain of the netball and lacrosse teams.

Wilkinson joined up as soon as she turned 18 in 1940; below, in Churchill's chair in the Cabinet War Rooms on her 95th birthday

She found Churchill to be courteous 'in an old-fashioned way' to female staff

At the age of 16 she took her school certificate, staying on for a further year, followed by 12 months at secretarial college in Bournemouth. She then worked for the deputy commander of the Royal Engineers in Ferndown, close enough to home to be able to cycle daily.

In September 1939, when war was declared, her sister, Angela, immediately joined up, eventually working on Enigma decoding at Bletchley. Their brother, Charles, joined the Somerset and Cornwall Light Infantry. Eve was still 17, but on her 18th birthday in January 1940, she too joined the WAAF (Women's Auxiliary Air Force). Having completed basic training she was asked where she would like to be posted. "Anywhere in the south of England," she requested. She was sent to a training airfield at Evanton, north of Inverness.

Early in 1942 she was selected for commissioning and attended officer training at Headington, Oxford, followed by a cypher course in Cirencester. On completion of the course she was posted to the War Cabinet offices, where there already was an Eve, so she was known as Theo, after her second name.

In the lead-up to the war Eve had met a young man called Peter Wilkinson. They became close and stayed in touch while Peter was attending the Royal Artillery officer training school at Woolwich. He was commissioned at the outbreak of war and soon sent out to Aden, subsequently serving in the Eighth Army. They were not to see each other for more than four years, until Peter was sent back to the UK at the end of December 1944.

The romance was sealed once more and they were married in March 1945. After a short honeymoon they both went back to work, Eve to London and Peter to be retrained with the Airborne forces in Lincolnshire where the 1st Airborne Division was stationed. Eve knew where the division was to be sent, Norway, but she could not and did not tell him. When peace was declared she was demobbed after three years decoding those vital messages.

After the war Peter stayed on with the army, twice being sent to Egypt. He left in 1963, first taking jobs in the commercial world and then becoming a priest, serving in the Kent parish of Yalding for many years.

Eve and Peter had seven children. Francis, a former paratrooper and company director (now deceased), Guy, a retired European Commission administrator and priest, Simon, a retired policeman and priest, Andrew, a retired company director, Manda, a retired ballerina with the Royal Ballet and Royal Dutch Ballet, Sarah, a retired midwife, and Alice, a deacon. The couple had 21 grandchildren and 37 great-grandchildren.

A message about something 'very destructive' referred to the atomic bomb

They moved house many times, although they remained in Yalding for 19 years before retiring to Flimwell, East Sussex, and subsequently moving to Brenchley, in Kent, to be closer to Eve's sister. When Peter died in 1999, Eve remained in Brenchley until 2015 and after that she lived first with her second son and latterly with her youngest daughter in Purley, south London.

On her 95th birthday a visit to the Cabinet War Rooms was arranged, which for her brought back a flood of memories. By special agreement she was allowed to sit in Churchill's chair, something that of course she had never done in those three years working for him.

Eve Wilkinson, Churchill's message coder, was born on January 14, 1922. She died on August 11, 2026 aged 104

There is no Court Circular for August 11, 2026

Births, Marriages and Deaths

To book a Birth, Marriage or Death announcement in the Register, visit: newsukadvertising.co.uk for help, please call 020 7782 7553 or email BMDs@thetimes.co.uk

AND a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground — then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.
Genesis 2.6-7 (ESV)
Bible verses are provided by the Bible Society

Births

GAISFORD-WILLIAMS on 22nd July 2026 to Victoria Gaisford and Bryn Williams, a daughter, Isabella Amie.

Forthcoming Marriages

MR A. D. O'BRIEN
AND MISS E. M. JOLLIFFE
The engagement is announced between Andrew, only son of Mr and Mrs David O'Brien of Kensington, London, and Eleanor, eldest daughter of Capt and Mrs Ross Jolliffe of Saxlingham Thorpe, Norfolk.

Deaths

FOSTER
Oliver Charles, on 6th August 2026, aged 51. Olly died at his beloved Egton. Beyond loved. A devoted father, husband, brother and a true friend. Funeral at 2pm on Tuesday 1st September at St Hilda's Church, Egton. No flowers by request but donations if desired to St Hilda's Church Egton and River Action UK c/o Robert Harrison & Sons, Carr End, Glaisdale, Whitby, YO21 2QH, 01947 897249 info@robertharrisons.co.uk

LONGMAN David Martin Hulbert, aged 97, died at home on 31st July 2026. Much loved by all. Husband of Clare, father to Ginny, Susie, Harriet, Ruth and Lottie. Grandfather of 16 and great-grandfather of three. Funeral service at St James the Great, Colwall, on Tuesday 1st September at noon, with a private family burial the next day. All inquiries to FW Spilsbury funeral directors, Malvern, 01684 892777.

O'RIORDAN Timothy Patrick on 7th August 2026. Peacefully at home with his family around him. Dearly loved son of Paddy and Jane, beloved father of Imogen and Patrick, much-loved brother of Susie and Winky, and dear uncle and friend to many. Private committal followed by a service of celebration at St Michael's and All Angels Church, East Coker, Somerset at 2pm on Friday 21st August. No flowers please, donations in lieu to the River Cree Hatchery & Habitat Trust SCIO.

Legal Notices

Notice of proposed payment out of capital for purchase of own shares
D M A GROUP LTD
Company number: 05829629 Registered office: 5 Beaufort House, Beaufort Court, Medway City Estate, Rochester, United Kingdom, ME2 4FB Pursuant to section 719 of the Companies Act 2006 (CA 2006), D M A Group Ltd (Company) hereby gives notice that:
The Company has approved, by special resolution passed on 6 August 2026, a payment out of capital for the purpose of acquiring 3,240,570 of its own preference shares of £1.00 each by purchase.
The amount of the permissible capital payment (as defined in section 710 of the CA 2006) for the shares in question is £3,240,570.
The directors' statement and the auditors' report required by section 714 of the CA 2006 are available for inspection at the Company's registered office as stated above.
Any creditor of the Company may at any time within the five weeks immediately following the date of the said special resolution apply to the court under section 721 of the CA 2006 for an order preventing the payment out of capital.

CR-2026-005050
NOTICE
OF
COURT HEARING
IN THE HIGH COURT
OF
JUSTICE
BUSINESS AND PROPERTY
COURTS
OF
ENGLAND AND WALES
COMPANIES COURT (CHD)
IN THE MATTER
OF
NCC GROUP PLC
-and-
IN THE MATTER
OF
THE COMPANIES ACT 2006
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that an application was made by Part 8 claim form on 3 August 2026 to His Majesty's High Court of Justice for the confirmation of the cancellation of £225 million standing to the credit of the share premium account of NCC Group plc (the "Company").
AND NOTICE BE FURTHER GIVEN THAT the application is directed to be heard before the Insolvency and Companies Court Judge at the Rolls Building, 7 Rolls Building, Fetter Lane, London, EC4A 1NL on 25 August 2026.
ANY creditor or shareholder of the said Company desiring to oppose the making of an order for the confirmation of the cancellation should appear at the time of the hearing in person or by counsel for that purpose. A copy of the claim form will be furnished to any such person requiring the same by the undermentioned solicitors upon the payment of the regulated charge for the same.
Dated: 12 August 2026
DLA Piper UK LLP
160 Aldersgate Street
London, EC1A 4HT
Tel: 020 7349 0296
Solicitors for the above-named Company
Ref: PW/72254/120116

Legal Notices

Claim No. CR-2026-003355
IN THE HIGH COURT
OF
JUSTICE
BUSINESS AND PROPERTY
COURTS
OF
ENGLAND & WALES
INSOLVENCY AND COMPANIES
LIST
(CHANCERY DIVISION)
IN THE MATTER
OF
FLEXION MOBILE PLC
AND
IN THE MATTER
OF
THE COMPANIES ACT 2006
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Order of His Majesty's High Court of Justice dated 28 July 2026 confirming the cancellation of the amount of £17,374,546 standing to the credit of the share premium account of the above-named Company, Flexion Mobile plc, and the Statement of Capital approved by the Court showing with respect to the capital of the Company as altered the several particulars as required by the Companies Act 2006 were registered by the Registrar of Companies on 30 July 2026.
Dated this 12th day of August 2026
Stephenson Harwood LLP
1 Finsbury Circus
London EC2M 7SH
Tel: +44 (0)20 7329 4422
Ref: 01-65-00137
Solicitors for the above-named Company

NOTICE UNDER SECTION 27
OF
THE TRUSTEE ACT 1925
THE AGILENT TECHNOLOGIES LDA UK LIMITED RETIREMENT BENEFITS PLAN
Important note The Agilent Technologies LDA UK Limited Retirement Benefits Plan (the "Plan") was set up on and from 1 August 2014 following the demerger of Agilent Technologies UK Limited into Agilent Technologies LDA UK Limited and Keysight Technologies Limited. This notice may be relevant to any person who believes they have a claim against, or entitlement to a pension or any benefit from the Plan, including any such claim deriving from any person's membership or another person's membership of a Predecessor Plan. The Predecessor Plans are: (i) between 1 November 2001 and 31 July 2014, the Agilent Technologies UK Limited Retirement Benefits Plan; and (ii) before 1 November 2001, the Agilent Section of the Hewlett-Packard Limited Retirement Benefits Plan. Notice is hereby given, pursuant to Section 27 of the Trustee Act 1925, that any person who believes that they have a claim against, or entitlement to a pension or any benefit from the Plan (including any such claim which derives from their membership or another person's membership of one or more of the Predecessor Plans) is hereby required to send particulars in writing by 12 October 2026 of their claim or entitlement (together with their full name, month of birth, postcode and last 4 characters of your NI number) For this purpose, a claim or entitlement to a pension or any benefit includes any claim arising in connection with the requirement to equalise guaranteed minimum pensions. Please send details to: The Agilent Technologies LDA UK Limited Retirement Benefits Plan Agilent Technologies LDA UK Ltd Retirement Benefits Plan | Sunderland | SR43 4JU Alternatively, please email particulars to: agilentldapensions@wtwco.com The current Trustees of the Plan are winding up the Plan and will use the assets of the Plan to secure benefits for persons entitled thereto having regard only to those persons of whose claims and entitlements they have notice, and will not be liable to any other person. Any individuals who have already been contacted by or on behalf of the Trustees about the wind-up of the Plan and/or the equalisation of guaranteed minimum pensions should not respond to this notice as the Trustees already have details of their claims and entitlements. Issued for and on behalf of the Trustees of the Agilent Technologies LDA UK Limited Retirement Benefits Plan. 12 August 2026

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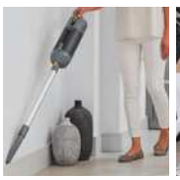
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Wattage	300W	380W	350W	660W
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Day 16 **Arrive in London**

Days not mentioned are spent relaxing at sea. Itinerary is based on 4th December 2026 departure and ports of call may vary on other dates

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Weather

Today Hot and sunny in central and southern Britain. Showers in the north and west. Max 35C (95F), min 14C (57F)

Around Britain

Key: b=bright, c=cloud, d=drizzle, pc=partly cloudy du=dull, f=fair, fg=fog, h=hail, m=mist, r=rain, sh=showers, sl=sleet, sn=snow, s=sun, t=thunder *=previous day **=data not available

	Temp C midday yesterday		Rain mm 24 hrs to 5pm yesterday	Sun hr*
Aberdeen	15	C	0.0	9.9
Aberporth	26	S	0.0	13.3
Anglesey	22	S	0.0	12.9
Aviemore	16	C	0.0	3.5
Barnstaple	27	S	0.0	**
Bedford	24	S	0.0	**
Belfast	21	PC	0.0	9.6
Birmingham	25	S	0.0	**
Bournemouth	25	S	0.0	13.1
Bridlington	21	S	0.0	**
Bristol	26	S	0.0	10.2
Camborne	24	S	0.0	12.0
Cardiff	25	S	1.6	12.3
Edinburgh	20	PC	0.0	8.9
Eskdalemuir	20	R	0.0	6.7
Glasgow	20	PC	0.0	10.6
Hereford	25	S	0.0	**
Herstmonceux	25	S	0.0	9.1
Ipswich	22	PC	0.0	5.8
Isle of Man	19	S	0.0	9.8
Isle of Wight	24	S	0.0	**
Jersey	28	S	0.0	13.4
Keswick	23	S	0.0	**
Kinloss	18	**	0.0	6.5
Leeds	23	PC	0.0	**
Lerwick	14	C	0.0	6.6
Leuchars	17	PC	0.0	9.0
Lincoln	23	S	0.0	12.4
Liverpool	25	S	0.0	**
London	25	S	0.0	12.6
Lyneham	25	S	0.0	10.9
Manchester	25	S	0.0	13.0
Margate	21	PC	0.0	10.4
Milford Haven	23	S	0.0	**
Newcastle	23	PC	0.0	**
Nottingham	26	S	0.0	12.1
Orkney	15	PC	0.0	**
Oxford	25	S	0.0	**
Plymouth	27	S	0.0	**
Portland	22	PC	0.0	**
Scilly, St Mary's	22	PC	0.0	**
Shoreham	25	S	0.0	11.4
Shrewsbury	25	S	0.0	12.5
Snowdonia	24	S	0.0	**
Southend	22	PC	0.0	11.6
South Uist	17	R	0.0	**
Stornoway	15	PC	0.0	2.6
Tiree	16	C	0.0	3.7
Whitehaven	21	S	0.0	9.6
Wick	**	C	0.0	**
Yeovilton	27	S	0.0	12.3

The world

All readings local midday yesterday

Alicante	35	S	Madeira	27	PC
Amsterdam	21	PC	Madrid	31	S
Athens	34	S	Malaga	30	S
Auckland	15	PC	Mallorca	35	PC
Bahrain	39	S	Malta	33	PC
Bangkok	32	PC	Melbourne	11	C
Barbados	31	PC	Mexico City	25	R
Barcelona	32	S	Miami	33	B
Beijing	31	S	Milan	34	S
Beirut	**	**	Mombasa	29	PC
Belgrade	35	S	Montreal	26	C
Berlin	20	S	Moscow	25	PC
Bermuda	30	B	Mumbai	26	D
Bordeaux	34	S	Munich	29	S
Brussels	24	S	Nairobi	24	PC
Bucharest	32	S	Naples	33	S
Budapest	36	S	New Orleans	31	PC
Buenos Aires	12	PC	New York	29	B
Cairo	38	S	Nice	30	B
Calcutta	31	**	Nicosia	33	PC
Canberra	13	PC	Oslo	18	S
Cape Town	20	PC	Paris	30	S
Chicago	29	B	Perth	14	PC
Copenhagen	19	PC	Prague	22	S
Corfu	36	PC	Reykjavik	15	B
Delhi	28	R	Riga	19	PC
Dubai	42	PC	Rio de Janeiro	23	C
Dublin	22	PC	Riyadh	45	PC
Faro	25	S	Rome	34	S
Florence	36	S	San Francisco	22	PC
Frankfurt	26	S	Santiago	8	S
Geneva	31	S	São Paulo	16	C
Gibraltar	26	S	Seoul	31	S
Helsinki	14	T	Seychelles	29	PC
Hong Kong	34	PC	Singapore	32	B
Honolulu	**	**	St Petersburg	20	B
Istanbul	29	PC	Stockholm	16	PC
Jerusalem	35	S	Sydney	20	S
Johannesburg	4	C	Tel Aviv	35	S
Kuala Lumpur	30	PC	Tenerife	28	PC
Kyiv	**	**	Tokyo	30	B
Lanzarote	29	PC	Vancouver	22	PC
Las Palmas	29	PC	Venice	34	S
Lima	22	C	Vienna	30	S
Lisbon	29	PC	Warsaw	21	B
Los Angeles	26	PC	Washington	33	PC
Luxor	40	S	Zurich	31	S

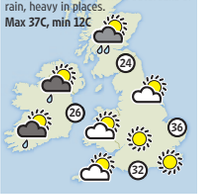
Five days ahead

Very hot in central and southern areas over the next few days, but rain or showers in the northwest

Tomorrow

Exceptionally hot across England and Wales, with dry and largely sunny weather continuing. Cloudier across Scotland and Ireland with outbreaks of rain, heavy in places.

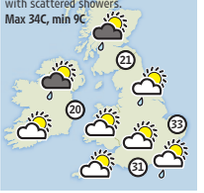
Max 37C, min 12C



Friday

Hot weather becoming more confined to southeastern Britain, and remaining dry with sunny spells. A little cooler and cloudier in the north and west with scattered showers.

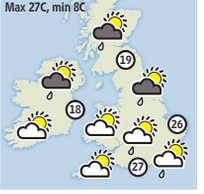
Max 34C, min 9C



Saturday

Sunshine and scattered showers, most frequent in the north. Mostly dry in the south with sunny spells, and continuing to feel hot.

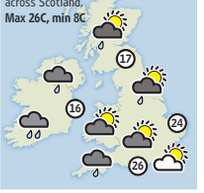
Max 27C, min 8C



Sunday

Cloud and rain moving across Ireland and parts of southwest England. Elsewhere a mixture of sunny spells, variable cloud and showers, mainly across Scotland.

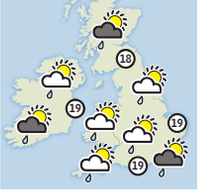
Max 26C, min 8C



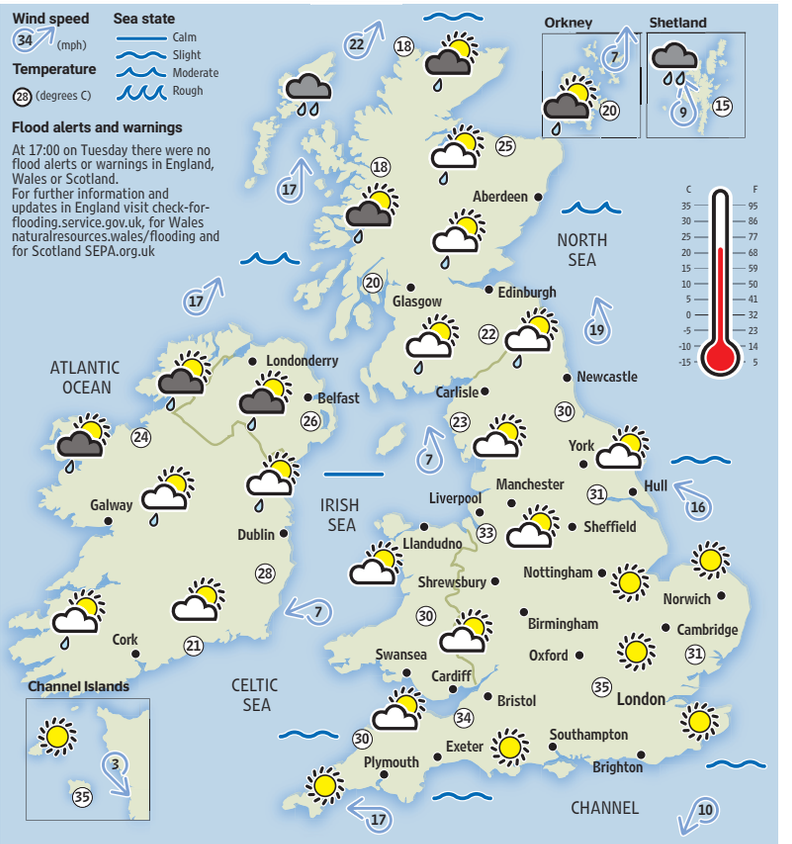
Monday

Fairly cloudy with the risk of showers in places, but some spells of sunshine.

Max 23C, min 8C



The Times weather page is provided by WeatherQuest

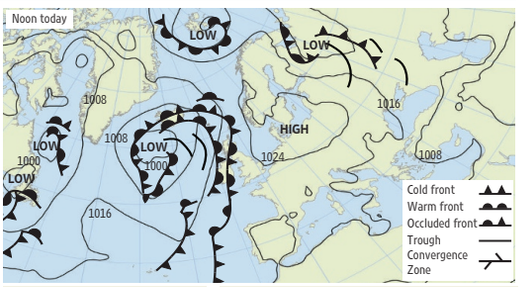


General situation: Hot, dry and sunny in southern and central areas. Showers or rain in the far north and west. **Wales, Midlands, E Anglia, Cen S Eng, London, SE Eng, SW Eng, Channel Is:** Very hot with near unbroken sunshine. Light southeasterly winds, a little breezier near the coasts. Maximum 35C (95F), minimum 14C (57F). **NW Eng, Cen N Eng, Lake District, IoM, NE Eng, E Eng:** A little patchy cloud at times, especially in the north, otherwise hot and dry with plenty of sunshine. Light southerly winds, breezier on the east coast. Maximum 32C (90F), minimum 15C (59F). **SW Scotland, Edinburgh and Dundee, Borders, Glasgow, Argyll, Aberdeen, Moray Firth, Cen Highland:** Occasional showers, mainly in the north and west. Otherwise warm and dry with the best of the sunshine in the south. Light southwesterly winds. Maximum 27C (81F), minimum 14C (57F). **NW Scotland, NE Scotland, N Isles:** Outbreaks of heavy rain in the west at first, patchier elsewhere. Rain turning more showery in the afternoon with some sunny spells. Light to moderate southwesterly winds. Maximum 23C (73F), minimum 15C (59F). **Republic of Ireland, N Ireland:** The risk of occasional sharp showers in the morning, becoming confined to the north and west in the afternoon. Feeling hot in the south and east, with plenty of sunshine. Light southerly winds. Maximum 28C (82F), minimum 14C (57F).

Tides

Tidal predictions. Heights in metres. All times in local time

Today		Ht		Ht
Aberdeen	01:28	4.2	14:07	4.2
Avonmouth	07:41	12.6	20:01	13.2
Belfast	11:39	3.3	23:49	3.7
Cardiff	07:33	11.7	19:53	12.3
Devonport	06:15	5.1	18:29	5.5
Dover	11:44	6.5	--:--	--
Dublin	--:--	--	12:10	3.9
Falmouth	05:41	4.9	17:58	5.3
Greenock	--:--	--	13:15	3.2
Harwich	--:--	--	12:10	3.9
Holyhead	10:54	5.4	23:07	5.8
Hull	06:29	7.3	19:11	7.4
Leith	02:43	5.4	15:14	5.6
Liverpool	11:42	9.2	23:59	9.6
London Bridge	01:59	6.9	14:31	6.7
Lowestoft	09:35	2.5	22:29	2.5
Milford Haven	06:41	6.8	19:01	7.2
Morecambe	11:53	9.2	--:--	--
Newhaven	11:44	6.6	--:--	--
Newquay	05:33	6.7	17:52	7.1
Oban	06:36	3.7	18:41	4.1
Penzance	05:05	5.2	17:26	5.6
Portsmouth	11:56	4.6	--:--	--
Shoreham	11:54	6.2	--:--	--
Southampton	11:36	4.5	23:40	4.5
Swansea	06:46	9.0	19:06	9.5
Tees	03:52	5.4	16:27	5.5
Weymouth	07:23	1.9	19:28	2.2



Synoptic situation

High pressure centred near the Baltic Sea extends a ridge westwards, keeping England, Wales and parts of Ireland and Scotland dry and sunny. It will be hot as well with a south to southeasterly flow drawing up air from Europe. Slow-moving occluded fronts will bring showers or spells of showery rain to northern and western parts of Scotland and Ireland.

Highs and lows

24hrs to 5pm yesterday

Warmest: Trawsgoed, Dyfed, 29.0C
Coldest: Kinbrace, 0.4C
Wettest: Baltasound, 0.6mm
Sunniest: Coventry, West Midlands, 13.5hrs*

Sun and moon

For Greenwich
Sun rises: 05.41
Sun sets: 20.28
Moon rises: 04.56
Moon sets: 20.29
First quarter: August 20

Hours of darkness

Aberdeen	21:27-05:01
Belfast	21:33-05:26
Birmingham	21:09-05:17
Cardiff	21:11-05:25
Exeter	21:10-05:29
Glasgow	21:31-05:15
Liverpool	21:17-05:18
London	20:59-05:13
Manchester	21:14-05:15
Newcastle	21:17-05:07
Norwich	20:57-05:04
Penzance	21:17-05:38
Sheffield	21:10-05:12

Weather Eye

Paul Simons

The Perseid meteor shower is due to peak overnight. It is one of the year's most active and brightest meteor showers with up to 150 meteors an hour. And this year it will be particularly spectacular because it coincides with a new moon, when the night sky will be especially dark from dusk to dawn, making it much easier to see the majority of the meteors.

This happens only roughly once a decade. The best views of all are found in the darkest skies possible, well away from artificial lights. But what makes the Perseids extra special is their brightness — some of the meteors are so vivid they can even be seen in the skies over cities.

The Perseids are known for the exceptionally speedy streaks of light they leave in the night sky as they hit the Earth's upper atmosphere. The best viewing conditions are from midnight to dawn. This year the views in the US and Europe may be affected by smoke from wildfires.

The Perseids are produced from the debris shed by the comet Swift-Tuttle, a block of ice and rock that orbits the Sun and leaves a stream of debris in its wake. When the Earth passes through the densest part of this debris it produces the peak of the meteor shower.

The particles of debris are only the size of a grain of sand but when they slam into the Earth's atmosphere at such speed they heat up to thousands of degrees celsius and burn up in bright trails of light, although most spectacular is when larger meteors explode into bigger, brighter fireballs.

By coincidence, a partial eclipse of the sun also happens today and can be seen in the UK from about 7.05pm to 7.15pm. But because the sun will be low in the sky, views of the partial eclipse could be obscured by clouds many miles away.

The total eclipse will follow a path through eastern Greenland, northwestern Iceland, the extreme northeastern part of Portugal at 7.30pm, northern Spain between 7.30pm to 8.33pm and finally the Balearic Islands at 8.33pm as the sun sets to the west.

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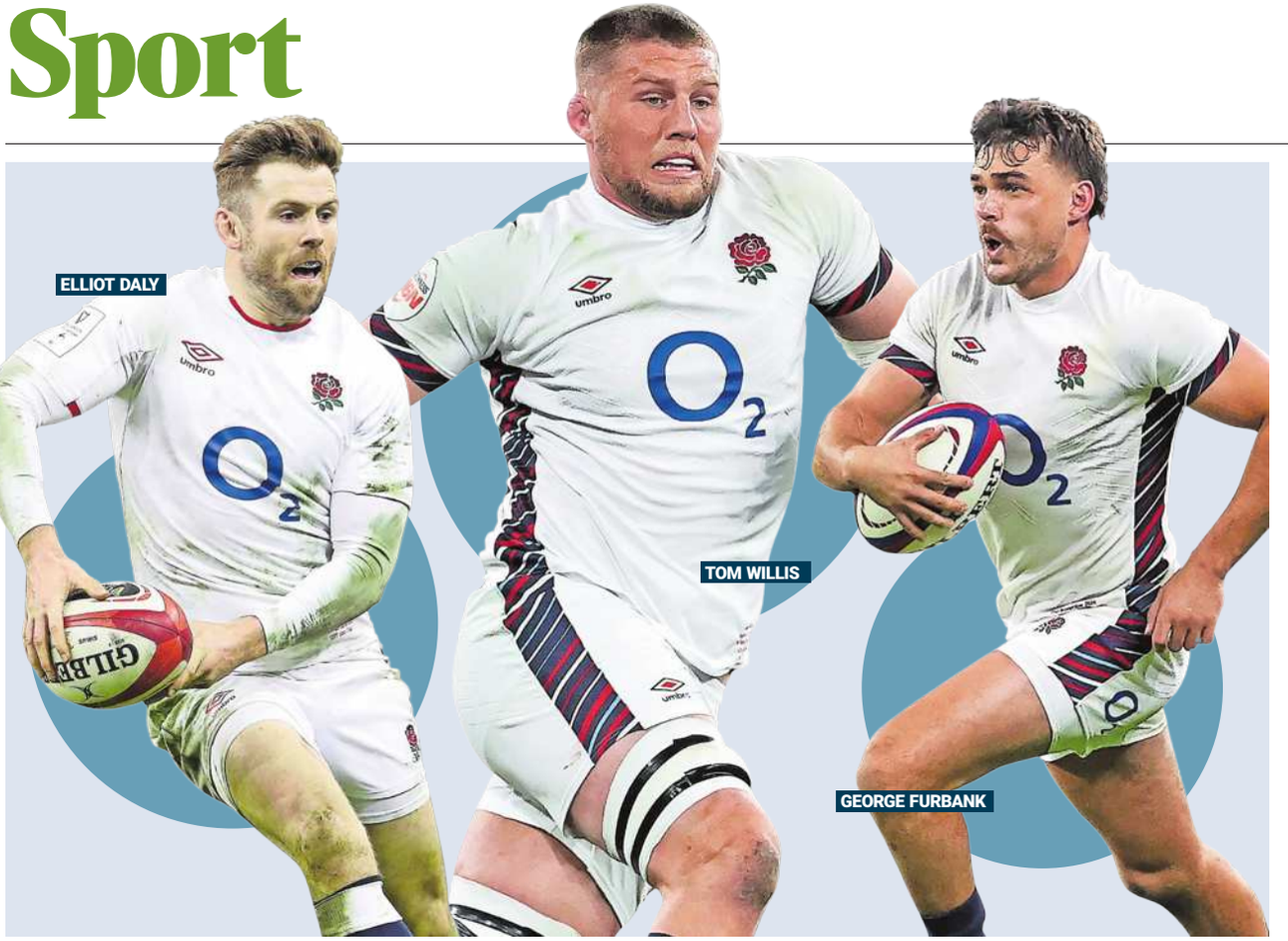
Sport



£79 to watch Bath in rain

Will Kelleher

Bath will charge more than £100 for top-priced tickets to Gallagher Prem matches this season, and £79 for seats in their uncovered stands which are exposed to rain.

The Recreation Ground, which will be rebuilt from May, will be the most expensive place to watch club rugby in England this season, closely followed by Exeter Chiefs' Sandy Park, Harlequins' Twickenham Stoop and Saracens' StoneX Stadium.

For their opening home game against Exeter, Bath will charge £109 for a seat on the halfway line in the West Stand. Adult fans will pay just shy of £80 to sit in the open stand, meaning they could watch in the rain, or up to £55 for a restricted-view ticket at the Rec.

Bath justify their prices by pointing out they regularly sell out. Their average crowd for Prem games last season was 14,509.

"We will be offering a wide range of ticket prices across the season to ensure accessibility for all supporters, with tickets starting at £1 for juniors and £9 for adults," a Bath spokesman said.

Borthwick's big decision on contracts after Willis waste

Charlie Morgan
Senior Rugby Writer

The major lesson from two years of hybrid contracts in England is a reinforcement of what everyone involved will have already known: rugby union is a world where best laid plans often go awry — sometimes spectacularly so.

Fairly or unfairly, Tom Willis personifies this notion. A year ago, having forced himself into England's starting side and starred in an impressive 2-0 series win over Argentina, the rambunctious No 8 was rewarded by being promoted into an expanded cohort of 25 players to hold an enhanced Elite Player Squad (EPS) deal.

Worth about £150,000 a season, these deals were introduced in 2024 as a flagship policy of the new professional game partnership (PGP) and are designed to give England greater control over an individual's medical provision. Steve Borthwick had seemingly seen enough from a player who was complementing exceptional domestic form with increasingly influential England displays to make Willis a key figure moving forward.

Less than 11 weeks later, in an awkward setback for the RFU, it emerged that Willis would be returning from Saracens to Union Bordeaux Bègles for the 2026-27 season and beyond. There was a financial sting in the tail too. Because Borthwick immediately ruled Willis out of selection for the upcoming autumn, his central contract represented a sunk cost. It will not be renewed.

Enhanced EPS contracts can be used in different ways: to proactively persuade a player back from a French club, to manage the game-time of a veteran or to develop a younger talent. The consensus around the country, from figures such as Rob Baxter and further afield, seems to be that the concept is a work in progress. Lengths of the deals are undisclosed, with Theo Dan the only individual so far to have been released after 12 months, and there is no mandatory positional spread. Ellis Genge was the only prop in the first batch, for example.

For all the nuances at play, the proximity of the World Cup means Borthwick will effectively be revealing the core of his squad for the 2027 tournament in Australia when the next batch of enhanced EPS deals are confirmed this week. He has filled the agreed maximum of 25 slots, so will be working on a one-in, one-out basis.

If you audit the current party, the nine tight-five forwards seem sturdy. It would be a shock to see any of Genge, Will Stuart, Fin Baxter, Joe Heyes, Jamie George, Luke Cowan-Dickie, Maro Itoje, Ollie Chessum and George Martin drop out. Stuart and Baxter will be guided back to full health in close correspondence with England, as Cowan-Dickie and Martin were before the July schedule.

2025-26 Elite Player Squad

Props Ellis Genge, Will Stuart, Fin Baxter, Joe Heyes **Hookers** Jamie George, Luke Cowan-Dickie **Locks** Maro Itoje, Ollie Chessum, George Martin **Back-row forwards** Tom Curry, Ben Curry, Ben Earl, Henry Pollock, Tom Willis **Scrum half** Alex Mitchell **Fly halves** George Ford, Fin Smith, Marcus Smith **Centres** Henry Slade, Ollie Lawrence **Back three** Immanuel Feyi-Waboso, Tom Roebuck, George Furbank, Elliot Daly, Tommy Freeman

0
Minutes played last season by Tom Willis, George Furbank and Ben Curry, all of whom had Elite Player Squad contracts

The back row becomes trickier. Willis will go, leaving at least one spot. Alex Coles and Guy Pepper, both of whom also featured in all 12 Tests last season, must be the next cabs off the rank, and there may be scope to include both.

While it feels like ancient history, Ben Curry enjoyed an excellent 2025 Six Nations before picking up an EPS deal. However, hamstring issues hampered him and he did not feature for England at all last season, putting him at risk unless he signed a multi-year arrangement. Retaining Ben Curry would be a huge endorsement of his defensive breakdown disruption, something England have missed when absorbing pressure since the beginning of 2026.

Sam Underhill has never held an England contract, despite being continually trusted in the biggest games, and was coy on the subject in November. Perhaps his injury profile has been off-putting. He missed the summer tour to have shoulder surgery and, having extended terms at Bath, will be itching to begin the coming campaign strongly. Courtney Lawes, who left for Brive before they came in, is back in the Prem with Sale Sharks as well, enhancing Borthwick's options.

As for the three other existing backrowers on EPS contracts, Ben Earl and Henry Pollock played in all 12 Tests in 2025-26, and Tom Curry started in South Africa as testament to Borthwick's trust in him. But the pivot to a burlier blindside flanker, rather than three smaller scavengers across the back row, could affect the EPS group.

Into the backs, Alex Mitchell will not shift. He is the sole contracted scrum half and could well stay that way given the pecking order seems rather fluid with room for a bolter in Archie McParland. Borthwick has tied down three fly halves — George Ford, Fin Smith and Marcus Smith — for the past two years. Fin Smith, the front-liner again, would appear to be the safest, though the other two are valued in different ways; Ford as a quasi-coach and Marcus Smith for versatility and spark.

Befitting the uncertainty in midfield, it would not be a total surprise to see both contracted centres, Ollie Lawrence and Henry Slade, overlooked, with Seb Atkinson, Benhard Janse van Rensburg and Joe Marchant in the mix. The explosive Lawrence, outstanding in November's victory over New Zealand, was dropped like a stone after the gruesome Six Nations loss to Ireland.

England clearly want a ball-player at inside centre, alongside speed and agility at outside centre, which makes it difficult for Lawrence.

Slade needed multiple injuries to those ahead of him to see a single game in the autumn, alongside Max Ojomoh against Argentina, and then spent the Six Nations as a specialist trainer. His return in July was indebted to George Furbank's appendicitis.

That said, once part of England's line-up, he has translated his Exeter Chiefs habit of making those around him look assured. Legal or otherwise, Slade's scrambling tackle on Bautista Delguy rescued a win in Santiago del Estero. Can Borthwick squeeze him, Ford and Marcus Smith into the same World Cup squad? This crop of central contracts will provide a clue.

Immanuel Feyi-Waboso and Tommy Freeman are no-brainers, leaving three interesting places among the back three. Contracted for 2024 and 2025, Furbank has played just three Tests, all of them in the autumn of 2024, on a hybrid contract. Keeping him on would confirm the suspicion that he is regarded as a crucial missing piece in this back division.

Finally, Tom Roebuck and Elliot Daly were added to the enhanced EPS group after eye-catching summers for England and the British & Irish Lions, respectively, in 2025. Daly battled back from a broken arm and refractured it in April. In between times, he was picked in three Test matches. Daly is now 33. Retaining him would signal how much Borthwick covets experience.

Roebuck, meanwhile, seemed to struggle for rhythm over the second half of 2025-26 and was apparently overtaken by Saracens' teenage tyro Noah Caluori. Only when Cadan Murley withdrew from the summer tour party, sending Freeman back to the wing, was he called up.

Hit the ground running for Sale Sharks in September and Roebuck, a strapping athlete, will push hard for more caps. But Borthwick must make a call on his enhanced EPS group before that. He may feel that his World Cup plans — as adaptable as they will have to be — will be better served with someone else.

Salisbury

Thunderer

2.30 Forbidden Fire
3.00 Regional Rock
3.30 Quest For Stars (nap)
4.00 Remi Mae (nb)
4.30 Miss Scott
5.00 Londoner

Going: good to firm **Racing TV**
Draw: no advantage

2.30 Novice Stakes
(2-Y-O: £5,940: 6f) (10)

1 (7) 06 **ARCTIC TSAR** 30 C Cox 9-7 **J Leavy**
2 (1) 30 **EASY ANSWER** 57 M Bell 9-7 **C Shepherd**
3 (5) 00 **FIRST MATE** 8 E J-Houghton 9-7 **T Marquand**
4 (6) **FLICK OF AN EYE** S & E Crisford 9-7 **D Probert**
5 (9) 03 **GOLD REEF CITY** 26 R Beckett 9-7 **R P Downey**
6 (10) 06 **GOODWOOD METEOR** 30 M Tregoning 9-7 **R Hornby**
7 (8) 04 **HACKPEN HILL** 22 (H) E Walker 9-7 **K Shoemark**
8 (3) 06 **ONGOMBO** 44 C Fellowes 9-7 **P Bradley**
9 (2) **SATURN STAR** R Beckett 9-7 **H Crouch**
10 (4) **FORBIDDEN FIRE** A Balding 9-2 **O Murphy**

3-1 Easy Answer, 9-2 Saturn Star, Forbidden Fire, 5-1 Flick Of An Eye, 10-1 Gold Reef City, Arctic Tsar, 12-1 Ongombo, Goodwood Meteor.

Thunderer's choice: Forbidden Fire is half-sister to classy See The Fire **Dangers**: Saturn Star, Easy Answer

3.00 Handicap (£7,851: 6f) (7)

1 (1) 06005 **SO DARN HOT** 33 (D) E Walker 4-10-0 **K Shoemark**
2 (2) -4322 **DR STRANGELOVE** 40 (CD) Oliver Cole 4-9-10 **T Marquand**
3 (6) 40-04 **DANDANA** 16 (T,D) S & E Crisford 3-9-9 **D Probert**
4 (4) 12-23 **REGIONAL ROCK** 16 (D) R Beckett 3-9-5 **H Crouch**
5 (7) 2-210 **GOLDEN BROWN** 60 (CD) E Walker 3-9-3 **R Hornby**
6 (3) 20354 **AN OUTLAW'S GRACE** 23 (P,CD) R Hannon 4-9-2 **S M Levey**
7 (5) 12220 **SUPREME KING** 14 (BF,CD) P Evans 6-9-2 **O Murphy**

7-2 Dr Strangelove, 5-1 Regional Rock, Golden Brown, Supreme King, So Darn Hot, 13-2 An Outlaw's Grace, 7-1 Dandana.

Thunderer's choice: Regional Rock runs off same mark as when a good third at Windsor last time **Danger**: Supreme King

3.30 Stakes (Listed)
(2-Y-O: £31,190: 1m) (8)

1 (6) 15043 **DANDYMAN DAN** 19 Oliver Cole 9-3 **K Shoemark**
2 (5) 15 **FIREHORSE** 19 S Woods 9-3 **T Marquand**
3 (4) 1530 **MY A'ALI BABA** 13 P Evans 9-3 **C Shepherd**
4 (8) 11 **QUEST FOR STARS** 14 C Appleby 9-3 **C Planas**
5 (3) 4431 **RAFE'S DA MAN** 11 R Hannon 9-3 **P Dobbs**
6 (2) 1 **ROCKET BOY** 15 M Botti 9-3 **M Ghiani**
7 (1) 31 **VELOCIRAPTOR** 18 H Palmer 9-3 **D Probert**
8 (7) 2221 **SCOMMESSA SICURA** 34 A Balding 8-12 **O Murphy**

5-2 Quest For Stars, 9-2 Dandyman Dan, 5-1 Scommessa Sicura, 11-2 Firehorse, 6-1 Rafe's da Man, 8-1 Velociraptor, 10-1 Rocket Boy, 25-1 other

Thunderer's choice: Quest For Stars had willing attitude when defying a penalty at Sandown **Danger:** Rafe's Da Man

4.00 Novice Stakes (£5,400: 6f) (7)

1 (5) 44 **BOLD SHOUT** 64 C Cox 3-9-7 **H Crouch**
2 (3) 0-4 **IT'S A MUGS GAME** 12 J Tickle 3-9-7 **S M Levey**
3 (2) 52 **KODICALL** 12 J S Moore 3-9-7 **Taylor Fisher**
4 (1) **ANNIE SIOUX** C Cox 3-9-2 **T Marquand**
5 (7) 5304 **GRIS DE CHINE** 29 (T) Zoe Hawkins 3-9-2 **C Shepherd**
6 (4) 5-05 **JUST DREAMING** 9 E J-Houghton 3-9-2 **O Carmichael (7)**
7 (6) -303D **REMI MAE** 22 A Balding 3-9-2 **O Murphy**

13-8 Remi Mae, 2-1 Bold Shout, 6-1 Kodicall, 13-2 Annie Sioux, 10-1 Gris De Chine, 33-1 Just Dreaming, It's A Mugs Game.

Thunderer's choice: Remi Mae first past the post at Nottingham last time only to be demoted **Danger:** Bold Shout

4.30 Fillies' Stakes (£39,697: 1m 2f) (7)

1 (3) 36522 **ALLA STELLA** 11 Sir M Prescott 4-9-4 **L Morris**
2 (2) 1-050 **GOLDILOCKS CEN** 13 A Watson 4-9-4 **T Marquand**
3 (1) 02-12 **REGAL CHARM** 19 (CD) H Candy 4-9-4 **R Hornby**
4 (7) 01116 **ANNASTARZY** 15 (BF) R Hannon 3-8-10 **J Leavy**
5 (5) 1-120 **FELICITAS** 59 (D) E Walker 3-8-10 **K Shoemark**
6 (6) 1-21 **MISS SCOTT** 25 (D) J & T Gosden 3-8-10 **O Murphy**
7 (4) -1304 **ON MESSAGE** 19 R Beckett 3-8-10 **H Crouch**

2-1 Felicitas, 4-1 Miss Scott, Alla Stella, 5-1 Regal Charm, 6-1 On Message, 14-1 Annastarzy, 25-1 Goldilocks Cen.

Thunderer's choice: Miss Scott is up in grade but can prove equal to task after fluent Newbury win **Danger:** Felicitas

5.00 Handicap (£5,888: 1m 2f) (7)

1 (6) 50542 **LONDONER** 11 (P,D) D & C Kubler 6-9-10 **T Marquand**
2 (5) 51-60 **FOX AVATAR** 44 (D) R Varian 5-9-7 **O Murphy**
3 (3) 004-0 **MISS TONNERRE** 77 (H) E Walker 4-9-7 **K Shoemark**
4 (1) 64-10 **ALMEKAREM** 11 (D) Sir M Prescott 4-9-2 **L Morris**
5 (7) 42563 **EUPATOR** 30 (P) R Hannon 4-9-1 **S M Levey**
6 (4) 4-304 **CARNIVAL DAY** 27 (BF,D) J Boyle 5-9-1 **P Cosgrave**
7 (2) 13003 **MYTHICAL BIRD** 23 (D) H Morrison 4-8-12 **R Hornby**

11-4 Londoner, 7-2 Mythical Bird, 4-1 Eupator, 5-1 Carnival Day, 6-1 Fox Avatar, 8-1 Almekarem, 25-1 Miss Tonnerre.

Thunderer's choice: Londoner running well in defeat and can get back to winning **Dangers**: Carnival Day, Mythical Bird

Beverley

Thunderer

2.15 Ard As A Rock
2.45 Coco Nova
3.15 The New Bay Pearl
3.45 Alpha Capture
4.15 Sunny Orange
4.45 Lamlash Bay

Going: good to firm-good in places
Draw: 5f-7f, low numbers best **Racing TV**

2.15 Novice Stakes
(2-Y-O: £4,860: 5f) (14)

1 (3) 50 **ARD AS A ROCK** 15 P Evans 9-7 **Joanna Mason**
2 (5) 00 **MUBEHIR** 7 P Midgley 9-7 **D Nolan**
3 (14) **TAJ MAHAL PALACE** B Ellison 9-7 **B Robinson**
4 (9) 205 **TRUE CHARM** 33 (T) Lemos Souza 9-7 **W Fentiman (3)**
5 (11) 0 **CLASSY JAGUAR** 15 T Coyle & K Wood 9-4 **D Costello**
6 (13) 06 **DESERT OUTLAW** 15 P Midgley 9-4 **M Winn**
7 (12) 22 **LEXINGTON BOOM** 15 (BF) G Tuer 9-4 **O Stammers**
8 (7) **MUGHEER** K R Burke 9-4 **C Lee**
9 (6) 256 **SPECTACULAR DIVER** 70 T Easterby 9-4 **D Allan**
10 (4) 0 **SCOTTYS ROCKET** 23 B Ellison 9-2 **C Hardie**
11 (1) **UBETTABEQUEEN** T Easterby 9-2 **S B Kirrane**
12 (10) 04 **NEEDIN' U** 67 (H) M & D Easterby 8-13 **B Garritty**
13 (8) **ONE MORE TILDA** I Furtado 8-13 **T Eaves**
14 (2) 0 **TIGGYWINKLE** 11 O Pears 8-13 **J Hart**

7-4 Lexington Boom, 7-2 Mugheer, 6-1 True Charm, 7-1 Spectacular Diver, 8-1 Needin' U, 16-1 Ard As A Rock, 20-1 Ubettabequeen, Taj Mahal Palace.

2.45 Maiden Stakes
(2-Y-O: £5,940: 7f) (13)

1 (9) 4 **COCO NOVA** 25 H Palmer 9-7 **Oisin Orr**
2 (4) 0444 **EMPIRE RISING** 16 Charlie Clover 9-7 **S James**
3 (12) **QUINTILLION** C Johnston 9-7 **A Mullen**
4 (7) **YOU GOT KNOW HOW** D O'Meara 9-7 **D Tudhope**
5 (11) 6 **DIPLOMACY** 19 M & D Easterby 9-4 **B Garritty**
6 (3) 04 **REAL EDITION** 16 Craig Lidster 9-4 **T Eaves**
7 (5) 60 **ASTRAL CALLING** 16 K R Burke 9-2 **C Lee**
8 (13) **COWGIRL** J & S Quinn 9-2 **J Hart**
9 (8) 3 **HAIR RAISING** 29 T Easterby 8-13 **D Allan**
10 (6) 004 **LOVEULONGTIME** 29 G Harker 8-13 **W Pyle**
11 (10) 00 **BE MORE RUTHLESS** 24 Adrian Nicholls 8-10 **J Nicholls (3)**
12 (1) 46 **BLACK FURY** 21 O Pears 8-10 **C Hardie**
13 (2) **HIGH ON HONEY** M & D Easterby 8-10 **Joanna Mason**

15-8 Coco Nova, 4-1 Empire Rising, 9-2 Real Edition, 6-1 Quintillion, 10-1 You Got Know How, 16-1 Black Fury, Cowgirl, Astral Calling.

3.15 Handicap (£4,004: 7f) (14)

1 (5) 00444 **THE NEW BAY PEARL** 17 S Whitaker 4-9-9 **T Eaves**
2 (14) 00203 **SIR DAVID** 11 (D) N Tinkler 4-9-9 **A Jary (3)**
3 (3) 22405 **KING SHARJA** 12 (CD) R Carr 6-9-8 **JP Sullivan**
4 (12) 50140 **MICKEY MONGOOSE** 67 (B,D) Olly Williams 6-9-6 **D Fentiman**
5 (1) 05056 **WILLOWINGHURN** 15 (V,D) D O'Meara 3-9-4 **D Tudhope**
6 (9) 05436 **DABBLING** 19 O Pears 3-9-3 **H Russell**
7 (11) 20543 **MISTER SKY BLUE** 5 G Tutty 4-9-2 **Conor Whiteley (5)**
8 (13) -0000 **BANTZ** 30 (P,D) A Brown 4-9-1 **S B Kirrane**
9 (8) 23434 **ALICE'S INFLUENCE** 40 (B) P Evans 3-9-0 **C Lee**
10 (4) 00345 **ELETTARIA** 14 (P,D) J Wainwright 7-9-0 **C Hardie**
11 (10) 0-000 **FURRST LADY** 58 Roger Fell 4-9-0 **O McSweeney**
12 (6) 5-000 **RYEFIELD** 11 L Mullaney 3-8-13 **A Rawlinson**
13 (7) 60300 **POWER OF CHORA** 17 Jessica Macey 3-8-10 **J Nicholls (3)**
14 (2) 01000 **GANTHORPE** 26 M & D Easterby 3-8-10 **Joanna Mason**

7-2 Sir David, 4-1 Mister Sky Blue, 13-2 The New Bay Pearl, 8-1 Alice's Influence, King Sharja, Dabbling, 10-1 Willowinghurn, 12-1 others

3.45 Handicap (£6,185: 7f) (11)

1 (3) 21202 **ALPHA CAPTURE** 10 (B,D) Roger Fell 6-10-4 **Conor Whiteley (5)**
2 (1) 01550 **OBELIX** 11 (D) J Camacho 6-10-3 **J Hart**
3 (9) 30342 **BELL SHOT** 17 (P,CD) M Appleby 7-10-3 **Mason Paetel (5)**
4 (11) 04210 **HIGHLAND OLLY** 18 (BF,CD) G Tuer 5-10-0 **A Rawlinson**
5 (5) 10420 **GLENFINNAN** 11 (H,CD) M Dods 6-10-0 **D Tudhope**
6 (2) 125-0 **STYLE OF LIFE** 89 (T) H Bethell 6-9-11 **E Tindall (5)**
7 (10) 12022 **TATTIE BOGLE** 4 (P,CD) C Johnston 4-9-10 **A Mullen**
8 (4) 04306 **FLYING FLETCHER** 14 R & P Fahey 5-9-6 **C Hardie**
9 (7) 00515 **BEYOND THE BAR** 16 (D) T Easterby 3-9-5 **D Allan**
10 (6) 22314 **HOMESTRAIT** 14 (P,BF,D) B Ellison 3-9-1 **B Robinson**
11 (8) 00000 **INTERVENTION** 19 (H,D) M Appleby 9-9-0 **Joanna Mason**

3-1 Alpha Capture, 4-1 Bell Shot, 5-1 Tattie Bogle, Homestrait, 10-1 Highland Olly, 12-1 Beyond The Bar, 14-1 Obelix, Flying Fletcher, Glenfinnan.

4.15 Handicap (£4,527: 1m 2f) (8)

1 (7) 24401 **BEARWITH** 18 (CD) H Bethell 8-10-2 **T Kiely-Marshall (5)**
2 (5) 35030 **NO KNEE NEVER** 22 (P,T,BF) James Owen 5-10-1 **C Lee**
3 (4) -4116 **CIAO CAPO** 33 (CD) R & P Fahey 3-9-8 **Oisin Orr**
4 (6) 43005 **DR RIO** 29 (CD) D Carroll 10-9-6 **Z Wheatley**
5 (3) 35653 **PRINCESS NIYLA** 25 (P,CD) A Brown 6-9-6 **D Nolan**
6 (1) 44232 **SUNNY ORANGE** 7 (P,C) T Easterby 6-9-5 **D Fentiman**
7 (2) 26013 **KITSUNE POWER** 14 (P,CD) T Easterby 7-9-5 **D Allan**
8 (8) 05/50 **LANGTON WOLD** 18 (T) B Ellison 7-8-11 **C Hardie**

11-4 Bearwith, 4-1 Sunny Orange, 5-1 Princess Niyla, 6-1 Kitsune Power, 7-1 Dr Rio, 8-1 No Knee Never, 10-1 Ciao Capo, 16-1 Langton Wold.

4.45 Handicap (3-Y-O: £4,527: 5f) (11)

1 (10) 00411 **ANGEL NUMBERS** 9 (D) R Carr 10-0(6ex) **JP Sullivan**
2 (7) 1-402 **STRAIGHT AHEAD** 27 (D) Craig Lidster 9-9 **C Lee**
3 (8) 05300 **HANNEY GIRL** 46 (T,CD) T Easterby 9-7 **D Allan**
4 (3) 4-203 **QILA** 5 (T) B Ellison 9-5 **B Robinson**
5 (5) 3-22 **KILFRUSH DESERT** 56 K Ryan 9-4 **T Eaves**
6 (2) 0314 **RUMBLE RUBY** 18 Lemos Souza 9-3 **W Fentiman (3)**
7 (11) 16140 **DRAGON SPIN** 19 (D) Steph Hollinshead 9-2 **D Costello**
8 (4) 15434 **SIMBA'S PRIDE** 27 (BF) M Dods 9-2 **M Winn**
9 (1) -4515 **LAMLASH BAY** 20 M & D Easterby 9-0 **L Chalkley (7)**
10 (6) 4-553 **BLACK MISSILE** 26 (P) J Camacho 8-12 **R Sexton**
11 (9) 66033 **UNDER THE RADAR** 23 (BF,D) T Easterby 8-10 **D Fentiman**

11-4 Angel Numbers, 6-1 Straight Ahead, Qila, 13-2 Kilfrush Desert, 8-1 Simba's Pride, 10-1 Rumble Ruby, Hanney Girl, Under The Radar.

Kempton Park

Thunderer

5.30 Coaxed
6.00 Manaar
6.30 Cogitate
7.00 Chalk Mountain
7.30 Metallo
8.00 Sovereign View
8.30 Forever Penywern
9.00 Semper Femina

Going: standard to slow **Racing TV**
Draw: 5f-1m, low numbers best

5.30 Fillies' Novice Stakes
(2-Y-O: £7,020: 7f) (13)

1 (11) **COAXED** J & T Gosden 9-2 **R Havlin**
2 (9) **CULLENAGH RAINBOW** A King 9-2 **C Bishop**
3 (2) **FRIENDLY FORCE** K P De Foy 9-2 **David Egan**
4 (8) 4 **MARSALA** 41 R Beckett 9-2 **E Greatrex**
5 (7) **MISS MINIVER** R Varian 9-2 **J Mitchell**
6 (6) 0 **PLEASE DON'T GO** 72 R Hughes 9-2 **C Fallon**
7 (13) **SOUTH CHINA SEA** D M Simcock 9-2 **G Wood**
8 (1) 0 **SPEED NATION** 35 S & E Crisford 9-2 **H Davies**
9 (5) 0 **SPIRIT OF PROGRESS** 41 Daisy Hitchins 9-2 **S Donohoe**
10 (10) **SWEET KATARINA** W Muir & C Grassick 9-2 **Kaiya Fraser**
11 (4) **SWELTERING** A Balding 9-2 **P J McDonald**
12 (3) 5 **THURITHA** 26 D M Simcock 9-2 **D E Hogan**
13 (12) **WOOLLAHRA** Jack Morland 9-2 **N Callan**

10-3 Coaxed, 4-1 Miss Miniver, 11-2 Sweltering, 6-1 Marsala, 10-1 Woollahra, Friendly Force, 12-1 Cullenagh Rainbow, South China Sea, Thuritha.

6.00 Fillies' Novice Stakes
(£6,480: 1m 4f) (5)

1 (4) **IT WOULD BE YOU** J125 J Candlish 4-9-12 **G Wood**
2 (5) 12 **MANAAR** 25 W Haggas 3-9-9 **C Fallon**
3 (1) 62 **ARRIVERA** 69 Tom Clover 3-9-2 **David Egan**
4 (2) 2-55 **LADYKIRK** 82 J Chapple-Hyam 3-9-2 **E Greatrex**
5 (3) 32 **LUNELLA** 28 Ollie Sangster 3-9-2 **J Mitchell**

11-10 Manaar, 4-1 Ladykirk, 5-1 Lunella, 11-2 Arrivera, 8-1 It Would Be You.

6.30 Handicap (£6,281: 7f) (12)

1 (3) 00626 **PERCY'S LAD** 32 (BF) D & C Kubler 8-9-10 **Ebrahim Nader**
2 (5) 06400 **DAPPER GUEST** 19 (V,D) G Margarson 4-9-9 **T P Queally**
3 (10) 35400 **EMINENCY** 16 (P,T,D) S C Williams 6-9-7 **C Fallon**
4 (9) 00354 **COGITATE** 16 (V,BF,D) E J-Houghton 5-9-7 **C Bishop**
5 (8) 60600 **BROSAY** 16 (B) Charlie Pike 4-9-6 **N Currie**
6 (11) 4-604 **ORCHID** 12 (P,T,C) G Boughey 4-9-5 **B Loughnane**
7 (1) 25-00 **FLAG OF ST GEORGE** 25 (P,D) J Chapple-Hyam 5-9-4 **Kaiya Fraser**
8 (2) 44106 **SEA FOUNDER** 34 (C) R Hughes 4-9-1 **F Marsh**
9 (12) 000-4 **LONGLAI** 54 (C,D) G Baker 8-9-0 **B Sayette**
10 (7) -3400 **ARCTICIAN** 61 (CD) S Dow 8-8-13 **H Davies**
11 (4) 0-600 **PETER THE WOLF** 16 (P) W Greatrex 4-8-11 **E Greatrex**
12 (6) 00000 **NEZEEH** 37 J & S Best 5-8-6 **W Cox**

3-1 Cogitate, 7-2 Percy's Lad, 7-1 Brosay, 8-1 Eminency, Orchid, 12-1 Flag Of St George, Longlai, 14-1 Peter The Wolf, Dapper Guest.

7.00 Handicap
(£6,281: 7f) (11)

1 (6) 1-300 **WILD NATURE** 33 (CD) M Attwater 4-9-9 **J Mitchell**
2 (1) 01340 **PHILANTHROPIST** 18 (P,D) J Fanshawe 4-9-8 **G Wood**
3 (3) -0004 **METAL MERCHANT** 18 (D) J Butler 6-9-7 **David Egan**
4 (4) 10602 **CHALK MOUNTAIN** 16 (T,CD) Zoe Hawkins 6-9-6 **A Redman (7)**
5 (11) 03-01 **RACINGBREAKS RYDER** 47 (D) C Hills 6-9-6 **Jason Watson**
6 (5) 50006 **BRIDGET'S VIEW** 48 (H,T,CD) S C Williams 4-9-4 **C Fallon**
7 (8) -0020 **KINIRO** 46 Dan Horsford 4-9-2 **B Loughnane**
8 (9) 16-40 **KITARO KICH** 27 (T,CD) G Baker 6-9-1 **N Callan**
9 (2) 60606 **LADY MARIKO** 25 (C,D) D Cunha 4-8-13 **S Donohoe**
10 (10) 42000 **HOW IMPRESSIVE** 33 (T,V,CD) H Palmer 7-8-12 **R Havlin**
11 (7) 14544 **BERRY CLEVER** 20 (CD) C Dwyer 5-8-10 **S De Sousa**

9-4 Racingbreaks Ryder, 7-2 Chalk Mountain, 11-2 Metal Merchant, 8-1 Philanthropist, 10-1 Wild Nature, Kiniro, 14-1 Berry Clever, Bridget's View.

7.30 Handicap
(£6,281: 1m) (10)

1 (6) 300-3 **WARRIOR MODE** 25 Sir M Prescott 4-10-3 **D E Hogan**
2 (9) 13410 **FORESEEN** 61 (CD) A Carroll 5-10-1 **S C Cronin (5)**
3 (10) 30-61 **STARDANCER** 46 (T,D) C Cox 4-9-13 **Georgia Dobie**
4 (2) 1-411 **GREY SOUL** 44 (P,D) Dan Horsford 4-9-13 **Jason Watson**
5 (4) 46440 **METALLO** 44 J Butler 5-9-11 **David Egan**
6 (3) 406-0 **KINDEST NATION** 61 (V) H Palmer 5-9-9 **R Havlin**
7 (1) -3310 **I AM ME** 63 (CD) M Murphy 4-9-7 **C Fallon**
8 (5) 6-000 **BEAUTY BY MY SIDE** 32 (D) J Parr 4-9-5 **J Mitchell**
9 (8) -0FP0 **LILI MARLEEN** 12 (D) Jack Jones 4-9-4 **F Marsh**
10 (7) 1461- **COTSWOLD COTTAGE** 320 Faye Bramley 6-9-3 **N Currie**

11-4 Grey Soul, 3-1 Stardancer, 7-2 Warrior Mode, 5-1 Cotswold Cottage, 12-1 Foreseen, 14-1 Kindest Nation, 16-1 I Am Me, Metallo.

8.00 Handicap
(£6,281: 1m) (10)

1 (5) 23602 **FINAL NIGHT** 18 (CD) J Butler 4-10-2 **B Loughnane**
2 (1) 00503 **GALLANT** 19 (T,C,D) Oli Rix 4-10-0 **C Fallon**
3 (6) 23221 **ROGUE ALLEGIANCE** 20 James Owen 4-9-13 **H Davies**
4 (2) 16/00 **CITY OF KINGS** 16 I Williams 6-9-11 **S Donohoe**
5 (7) -2634 **SOVEREIGN VIEW** 18 (P,D) J Tate 3-9-11 **Jason Watson**
6 (3) 00-00 **SAN JUANITO** 44 M Murphy 4-9-10 **R Havlin**
7 (4) 1-550 **DUMUJI** 13 (C) C Cox 3-9-6 **P J McDonald**
8 (9) -0010 **GUNFIGHTER** 12 (BF) J Butler 5-9-5 **David Egan**
9 (8) 05042 **MAN OF DESERT** 41 (T) C Dwyer 5-9-3 **S De Sousa**
10 (10) 0326- **LIEUTENANT KIJE** 287 T Ward 3-9-0 **Kaiya Fraser**

2-1 Rogue Allegiance, 4-1 Final Night, 11-2 Gallant, 13-2 Sovereign View, 8-1 Lieutenant Kije, 12-1 Man Of Desert, Dumuji, 14-1 Gunfighter.

8.30 Handicap
(£8,246: 1m 4f) (12)

1 (6) 00/0- **CUMULONIMBUS** 410 (T,D) G Baker 7-10-2 **N Callan**
2 (4) -0131 **THE GREEN MILE** 44 (C) N Mulholland 4-10-1 **C Bishop**
3 (3) 32434 **BULLETIN** 41 (C) J Portman 4-10-1 **H Davies**
4 (8) 146 **GALAXY STAR** 73 (C) A King 4-10-0 **Harry Vigors (5)**
5 (9) 211-1 **FOREVER PENYWERN** 38 W Greatrex 4-10-0 **E Greatrex**
6 (5) 51230 **SON OF MAN** 77 (D) J Boyle 5-9-12 **David Egan**
7 (1) 1-250 **CLASSICAL ALLUSION** 95 (D) A Balding 4-9-11 **C Hutchinson**
8 (7) 6-31 **KOKBASTAU** 16 (D) R Varian 3-9-6 **C Fallon**
9 (11) 500/6 **DUC DE KENT** 18 I Williams 6-9-5 **S Donohoe**
10 (12) -4510 **MUST BELIEVE** 68 (P,C) G Baker 4-9-3 **B Sayette**
11 (2) 10254 **DUST COVER** 35 (C) R Burdon 4-9-2 **J Mitchell**
12 (10) 121/0 **MATHEMATICIAN** 44 (H,C) N Mulholland 6-9-1 **F Marsh**

11-4 Kokbastau, 7-2 The Green Mile, 4-1 Forever Penywern, 7-1 Bulletin, 10-1 Dust Cover, 14-1 Son Of Man, Classical Allusion, Galaxy Star.

9.00 Handicap
(£4,187: 1m 4f) (11)

1 (9) 14321 **SOLANNA** 50 (C) J Butler 7-10-2 **B Loughnane**
2 (3) 040-3 **MAESTRO DEL MAR** 54 I Mohammed & J Santos 4-10-2 **S De Sousa**
3 (4) 45436 **NAASMA** 30 (C) P Phelan 7-10-0 **Kaiya Fraser**
4 (5) -5103 **ROLAND GARROS** 7 (P,T,D) Hayley Burton 5-10-0 **A Egan (7)**
5 (1) 02-50 **STAR TIME** 70 (D) A King 5-9-13 **Harry Vigors (5)**
6 (7) 4000- **CROOKED PATH** J114 James Owen 4-9-11 **C Fallon**
7 (11) 30230 **IMPERIAL DECISION** 131 (P,T) Kieran Burke 4-9-10 **Josephine Gordon**
8 (6) 6640 **ELJOWHARY** 45 E J-Houghton 3-9-6 **C Bishop**
9 (2) 00203 **SEMPER FEMINA** 21 R Hannon 3-9-2 **S C Cronin (5)**
10 (10) 235-0 **BACKER BILK** J40 (H) L Dace 4-9-2 **G Wood**
11 (8) 00133 **MAYWEDANCE** 35 (P,CD) J G O'Shea 4-9-2 **J Mitchell**

5-2 Solanna, 4-1 Crooked Path, 7-1 Maywedance, 10-1 Star Time, Semper Femina, Maestro Del Mar, Roland Garros, 12-1 Eljowhary.

Ffos Las

Thunderer

3.37 Eskimo Pie
4.07 The Coffee Pod
4.37 Narrjoo
5.10 Angel's Call
5.40 John Harrison
6.10 A Daughters Love

Going: good
Draw: 5f, low numbers best
Sky Sports Racing

3.37 Fillies' Stakes
(£5,400: 6f) (5)

1 (1) **DIXIE BLUE** B Millman 3-9-2 **D Keenan**
2 (5) -3645 **ESKIMO PIE** 47 J Chapple-Hyam 3-9-2 **D Muscutt**
3 (3) 6 **LIVVYS EDGE** 29 C Mason 3-9-2 **G Mangan**
4 (4) 4430- **MOLLSTAR** 237 E Walker 3-9-2 **Ashley Lewis (3)**
5 (2) **MYSTIC VEIL** A Watson 3-9-2 **P-L Jamin**

4-5 Eskimo Pie, 7-2 Mystic Veil, 4-1 Mollstar, 10-1 Dixie Blue, 20-1 Livvys Edge.

4.07 Handicap (£3,454: 5f) (9)

1 (8) -0053 **THE COFFEE POD** 8 (H,D) W Muir & C Grassick 5-9-11 **R Kavanagh (3)**
2 (3) 04-25 **MIRACLEOFTHEANDES** 18 W Greatrex 3-9-9 **J Callan**
3 (2) 00-65 **PORTACLOY** 21 (T) D & C Kubler 3-9-9 **D Muscutt**
4 (9) 44143 **DARK SUN** 18 (P,D) J Bennett 5-9-8 **Laura Coughlan (3)**
5 (1) 003 **SHEIK YERBOUTI** 57 G Harris 5-9-8 **Ashley Lewis (3)**
6 (4) 00603 **LITTLE JAYBEE** 9 (D) P Evans 3-9-6 **J F Egan**
7 (5) 04061 **HAPPIER** 12 (D) M Keighley 6-9-4 **Jack Doughty**
8 (7) 2/344 **RIVER EDGE** 19 (P) C Mason 5-8-8 **G Mangan**
9 (6) 0-000 **MISS GOLD** 30 (B,T) D Flood 3-8-5 **T Heard**

11-4 Happier, 3-1 The Coffee Pod, 4-1 Dark Sun, 7-1 River Edge, 10-1 Miracleoftheandes, Sheik Yerbouti, Little Jaybee, 16-1 others

4.37 Maiden Stakes
(2-Y-O: £7,020: 7f) (7)

1 (3) 2 **DRUM BAY** 37 R Beckett 9-7 **R Clutterbuck**
2 (2) **ENGRAVED** J Fanshawe 9-7 **D Muscutt**
3 (5) **GRAND HAVANA** A King 9-7 **L Catton (3)**
4 (1) 2 **NARRJOO** 20 S & E Crisford 9-7 **J Callan**
5 (6) 00 **Q T BOY** 16 P Evans 9-7 **W Carson**
6 (4) **WORLD STAR** Ollie Sangster 9-7 **D Keenan**
7 (7) 3 **ISABELLA DE VEGA** 19 E Walker 9-2 **G Downing**

7-4 Narrjoo, 11-4 Drum Bay, 5-1 Engraved, 7-1 World Star, 8-1 Isabella De Vega, 12-1 Grand Havana, 20-1 Q T Boy.

5.10 Handicap (£3,454: 1m) (10)

1 (10) 61255 **NAMMOS** 35 (D) J & R Flint 6-9-9 **W Carson**
2 (9) 00041 **ANGEL'S CALL** 43 (P,C) Mrs N Evans 5-9-6 **R Kavanagh (3)**
3 (6) -0000 **KEV** 85 W Muir & C Grassick 4-9-4 **Ashley Lewis (3)**
4 (1) 4-065 **RIVAL** 28 (CD) J & R Flint 8-9-3 **D Muscutt**
5 (5) 00-00 **OVIEDO** 75 Alexandra Dunn 6-9-3 **Millie Wonnacott (5)**
6 (8) 452U3 **KING OF THE DANCE** 15 (P,D) B J Llewellyn & R Williams 7-9-2 **D J Murphy (7)**
7 (3) 06000 **UNCLE ALBERT** 50 (T) A Wintle 5-9-0 **D Keenan**
8 (2) 50430 **CHANGE OF FORTUNE** 58 (P,CD) B J Llewellyn & R Williams 7-9-0 **J Callan**
9 (7) 0662 **IVAT GHIA** 21 (H) M Usher 3-8-13 **T Heard**
10 (4) 46-3 **BIG MOONRISE** 197 P Evans 3-8-8 **J F Egan**

3-1 Angel's Call, 9-2 King of The Dance, 5-1 Ivat Ghia, Nammos, 8-1 Change Of Fortune, 10-1 Big Moonrise, 12-1 Uncle Albert, Rival.

5.40 Handicap (£4,187: 1m) (6)

1 (1) 00030 **PORT LOUIS** 20 (P,D) B J Llewellyn & R Williams 5-9-9 **C Tucker (7)**
2 (5) 3-065 **NEXT GUILIAN** 30 B Millman 3-9-9 **D Keenan**
3 (4) -304P **THE STONE POWER** 12 R Beckett 3-9-8 **R Clutterbuck**
4 (2) -0364 **ROYAL BODYGUARD** 54 (D) M Bell 3-9-6 **D Muscutt**
5 (3) 2-433 **JOHN HARRISON** 25 A King 3-9-2 **L Catton (3)**
6 (6) 000 **BRAVE NEW WORLD** 41 E Walker 3-8-12 **Ashley Lewis (3)**

15-8 John Harrison, 7-2 The Stone Power, 9-2 Royal Bodyguard, 5-1 Brave New World, 11-2 Next Guilian, 16-1 Port Louis.

6.10 Handicap (£3,454: 1m 4f) (6)

1 (6) 00032 **MEET ME IN MERAKI** 29 (BF,D) P Evans 5-10-2 **J F Egan**
2 (4) 65053 **BULLDOG SPIRIT** 29 (P,T,D) B J Llewellyn & R Williams 6-10-2 **D Muscutt**
3 (5) 4041 **NOBLE GRACE** 15 (CD) W Greatrex 5-10-0 **Ashley Lewis (3)**
4 (3) 30311 **BELLE OF KT** 12 (D) J S Moore 5-9-8 **Millie Wonnacott (5)**
5 (2) 11501 **A DAUGHTERS LOVE** 8 (CD) D Flood 3-9-4(6ex) **D Keenan**
6 (1) 63400 **CLAYTONS KOLATONIC** 58 D F Davis 3-9-3 **Jack Doughty**

2-1 Belle Of Kt, 3-1 A Daughters Love, 4-1 Noble Grace, 9-2 Meet Me In Meraki, 8-1 Bulldog Spirit, 20-1 Claytons Kolatonic.

Yesterday's racing results

Carlisle

Going: Good (good to firm in places)

2.45 (7f 173yd) 1, **Hostility** (C J Whiteley, 2-1 fav); 2, Izzari (100-30); 3, Perfidia (9-2). 8 ran. 1l, ½l. D O'Meara.
3.15 (6f 195yd) 1, **Rogue Passion** (O J Orr, 30-100 fav); 2, Lizzie Bennet (25-1); 3, Girl Scout (3-1). 5 ran. 2½l, 27½l. E Bethell.
3.45 (5f) 1, **Influencer Man** (Mikey Sheehy, 2-1 fav); 2, Concert Pitch (9-4); 3, Lauralynn (9-1). 7 ran. nk, 3¼l. A Keatley.
4.15 (5f 182yd) 1, **Sixtygeesbaby** (Mark Winn, 4-1); 2, Valentine Catcher (12-1); 3, Pickersgill (10-1). 8 ran. NR: Stirrup Cup. 4l, nk. D O'Meara.
4.45 (1m 6f 32yd) 1, **Asia Force** (C Lee, 6-4); 2, Dance Time (15-2); 3, Ludo's Landing (16-1). 6 ran. . 5½l, 2¼l. K R Burke.
5.15 (6f 195yd) 1, **Truly Special** (Jason Hart, 25-1); 2, Viviana (7-2); 3, Only Dream Big (9-4). 7 ran. nk, nk. J S Wainwright.
Placepot:£145.60 Quadpot:£92.80

Lingfield Park

Going: Standard

2.30 (1m 2f) 1, **Roman Secret** (Finley Marsh, 17-2); 2, Shifra (4-1) 2, Lady Aiyana (20-1); 12 ran. NR: Lady Of Chivalry. 1l, l. L A Mullaney.
3.00 (5f 6yd) 1, **Bellatina** (Cieren Fallon, 7-1); 2, Birkacre Brow (12-1); 3, Desert Sands (6-4). 5 ran. 3¼l, 1½l. C Johnston.
3.30 (1m 2f) 1, **She Commands** (Edward Greatrex, 17-2); 2, Guesstimate (8-1); 3, Asset (9-1). 9 ran. NR: Pomme Pomme. 1½l, hd. R M Beckett.
4.00 (1m 4f) 1, **Foinix** (Finley Marsh, 9-1); 2, Fighting Poet (80-1); 3, Charencey (9-4 fav). 11 ran. ½l, 1l. J & S Best.
4.30 (7f 1yd) 1, **Malachy's Wish** (Saffie Osborne, 5-1); 2, Do Bronxs (9-2); 3, Bone Marra (2-1 fav). 7 ran. 17½l, ¾l. J A Osborne.
5.00 (7f 1yd) 1, **Yes Waliim** (Oliver Hoodless, 13-2); 2, Twitch (6-1); 3, Ashford Hill (16-1). 10 ran. NR: African Spirit. nk, ½l. R Hughes.
Placepot:£10,825.00 Quadpot:£257.70

Nottingham

Going: Good to Firm (good in places)

5.45 (1m 75yd) 1, **Apulia Bay** (James Doyle, 1-6 fav); 2, Time For The Moon (7-2). 6½l. S & E Crisford.
6.15 (6f 18yd) 1, **Baddaddan** (George Wood, 2-1); 2, Blessed Voyager (4-6 fav); 3, Jeyoush (6-1). 3l, 1½l. R Spencer.
6.45 (2m) 1, **Hope Rising** (Harry Vigors, 2-7); 2, Joanna Hiffernan (5-1); 3, Simiyann (15-2). 5 ran. 19l, 6½l. Jamie Snowden.
7.15 (1m 2f 50yd) 1, **Midnight Media** (Tom Marquand, 5-2 fav); 2, Beauty Generation (10-1); 3, The Anthony Gover (14-1). 8 ran. ¾l, ¾l. W Muir & C Grassick.
7.45 (5f 8yd) 1, **Moulin Booj** (Tom Marquand, 6-4 fav); 2, Jax Edge (11-2); 3, Mesaafi (5-1). 7 ran. ½l, 1l. George Scott.
8.15 (6f 18yd) 1, **Melissa Honey** (D Probert, 5-1); 2, Thunderous Love (15-8 fav); 3, Come On Eibhlin (9-2). 6 ran. nk, ¾l. M Herrington.

Hamilton

Going: Good (good to soft in places)

5.30 (5f 7yd) 1, **Tanjen** (Jake Dickson, 7-2); 2, Never Dark (9-2); 3, Summerstorms Dream (12-1). 7 ran . 3½l, nk. T D Easterby.
6.00 (6f 6yd) 1, **Harley** (D Tudhope, 6-5 fav); 2, Sea Mirage (7-1); 3, Profitability (10-1). 6 ran. 3¼l, nk. E Bethell.
6.30 (1m 68yd) 1, **Matter Of Britain** (D Tudhope, 4-1); 2, Al Fujairah (18-1); 3, Sheikhnshah (4-9 fav). 8 ran. 3l, 1¼l. D O'Meara.
7.00 (1m 1f 35yd) 1, **Strength of Spirit** (J Nicholls, 15-2); 2, Impartiality (28-1); 3, Spoken Truth (3-1). 13 ran. 1l, ½l. K R Burke.
7.30 (1m 68yd) 1, **Sanafi Zabeel** (P Mulrennan, 11-10); 2, Quiet Resolve (6-1); 3, Second Fiddle (5-1). 9 ran. NR: Pink Azalea. 17½l, hd. J S Goldie.
8.00 (6f 6yd) 1, **Dandy Magic** (Lauren Young, 12-1); 2, Milford (100-30); 3, Station X (7-1). 12 ran. 1¼l, ¾l. J S Goldie.
8.30 (1m 4f 15yd) 1, **Satyress** (S D Bowen, 11-2); 2, Falaise Blanc (5-1); 3, Ebony Maw (8-1). 8 ran. hd, ½l. H Bethell.

Results

Football

Champions League third round
Second legs: Kairat 0 Levski Sofia 1 (Agg 0-2); Bodo/Glimt 3 Union Saint-Gilloise 2 (AET, agg 6-5); Sabah 4 AGF 0 (Agg 5-2); Kauno Zalgiris 1 Dinamo Zagreb 2 (Agg 1-7); NEC 2 Olympiakos 1 (Agg 2-1); Red Star Belgrade 0 Hapoel Be'er Sheva 2 (Agg 0-3).

Cricket

The Hundred: Manchester Super Giants Women v SunRisers Leeds Women
Old Trafford (Manchester Super Giants Women won toss and elected to bowl): SunRisers Leeds Women win by 41 runs

SunRisers Leeds Women		(balls)
B F Smith c Villiers b Bryce	17	(16)
P Litchfield c Scrivens b Villiers	27	(12)
†L Winfield-Hill run out	20	(15)
A J Sutherland not out	62	(36)
*D R Gibson c Brown b Villiers	24	(13)
J L Jonassen not out	10	(9)
Extras (lb 4, w 1, nb 1)	6	
Total (4 wkts, 100 balls)	**166**	

Bowling Ballinger 15-24-0; Ecclestone 20-29-0; Villiers 15-25-2; MacDonald-Gay 15-43-0; Bryce 20-14-1; Tyson 15-27-0.

Manchester Super Giants Women		(balls)
S S Mandhana b Jonassen	28	(17)
G Scrivens st Winfield-Hill b Sutherland	31	(24)
†R M Ghosh c Cross b Jonassen	13	(14)
*M M Lanning b Jonassen	10	(15)
K E Bryce retired	15	(14)
M J Brown c Sutherland b Sharma	11	(10)
S Ecclestone c Gibson b Sutherland	4	(5)
M K Villiers c Sutherland b Sharma	0	(1)
R L MacDonald-Gay not out	5	(2)
R E A Tyson not out	1	(1)
Extras (b 4, nb 3)	7	
Total (8 wkts, 100 balls)	**125**	

Bowling McCarthy 5-8-0; Cross 10-23-0; Sharma 15-21-2; Jonassen 20-21-3; Sutherland 20-17-2; Baker 15-14-0; Gibson 15-17-0.

Manchester Super Giants Men v SunRisers Leeds Men
(Manchester Super Giants Men won toss and elected to bowl.): Manchester Super Giants Men win by 10 wickets

SunRisers Leeds Men		(balls)
M R Marsh c Baker b Lakanwal	32	(23)
†R D Rickelton c Lakanwal b Atkinson	17	(7)
*Z Crawley c Bracewell b Baker	31	(28)
H C Brook c Seifert b Baker	10	(7)
D W Lawrence c Lakanwal b Walter	12	(10)
M L Revis c Walter b Dawson	6	(7)
T E Lawes c Dawson b Tongue	1	(5)
B A Carse c Klaasen b Atkinson	12	(8)
M J Potts run out	1	(3)
N T Ellis c Walter b Atkinson	0	(1)
A Ahmed not out	1	(1)
Extras (lb 2, w 2)	4	
Total (100 balls)	**127**	

Bowling Atkinson 20-30-3; Tongue 20-23-1; Baker 20-22-2; Dawson 15-15-1; Lakanwal 20-31-1; Walter 5-4-1.

Manchester Super Giants Men		(balls)
T L Seifert not out	80	(40)
P I Walter not out	44	(28)
Extras (w 3, nb 1)	4	
Total (no wkt, 67 balls)	**128**	

Bowling Carse 17-48-0; Ellis 20-18-0; Potts 15-25-0; Lawes 5-9-0; Ahmed 10-28-0.

Metro Bank One Day Cup
Group A: Rugby Warwickshire (263 all out, V Jani 98) bt Kent (176 all out, E Bamber four for 29) by 87 runs.
Cheltenham Gloucestershire (309-7, J Eckland 68) bt Northamptonshire (308 all out, N McSweeney 79, D Ahmed four for 56) by three wickets.
Taunton Lancashire (443-6, K Jennings 156, R Flintoff 123) bt Somerset (269 all out, T Lammonby 68) by 174 runs.
The Oval Nottinghamshire (299-4, G Munsey 138) bt Surrey (298-8, R Patel 102) by six wickets.
Group B Chelmsford: Yorkshire (155-3, W Bennison 60) bt Essex (151 all out, B Coad three for 22) by seven wickets.
Worcester Worcestershire (291 all out, T Taylor 86) bt Durham (214 all out, B McKinney 82) by 77 runs.
Southampton Derbyshire (317-5, M Andersson 125) bt Hampshire (309 all out, A Neal 110) by eight runs.
Radlett Middlesex (354-8, J Cracknell 128, N Fernandes 92) bt Sussex (262 all out, J Simpson 65) by 92 runs.

Athletics

European Championships, Birmingham
Men's hammer throw final: 1 B Halasz (Hun) 84.25m; **2** M Hummel (Ger) 81.30; **3** M Kokhan (Ukr) 79.49.
Women's 5,000m final 1 N Battocletti (It) 15mins 37.84secs; **2** M García (Spa) 15:39.98 **3** M Majori (It) 15:40.65.

Tennis

ATP: National Bank Open, Montreal
Men's singles: Quarter-finals (seeds in brackets): B Nakashima (US) (28) bt L Darderi (It) (19) 6-2, 6-3.

Sport European Athletics Championships

‘Total domination’: Glave and

Matt Lawton

Chief Sports Correspondent

There were more empty seats and there was even dust blowing in from the scorched earth of the surrounding parkland here at the Alexander Stadium last night.

But from under a cloud of yet more complaints about another poorly attended session of European athletics, a second British 100m champion in as many nights emerged.

“It’s total domination,” declared Romell Glave, with the men going one better than Amy Hunt the previous evening by claiming the top two spots on the podium thanks to a similarly impressive display of sprinting by Jeremiah Azu.

Glave has long had the ability to achieve something like this. The Jamaican-born sprinter moved to South Norwood at 15 and had become the world’s fastest teenager within two years of landing in the UK, only to have his progress stalled by twice fracturing his back. “It first happened during Covid,” he explained last night. “We couldn’t access the track in Croydon for a spell so I was training on a different surface, on grass.”

By this season, however, the 26-year-old who even likes to run in sunglasses at night, had lowered his best time to 9.97sec and he followed that on this occasion by upgrading the European bronze he claimed in Rome two years ago with a first major championship title. “I’m the king of Europe,” he declared from beneath his victor’s crown.

Racing into a slight headwind, Glave crossed the line in 10.09, with Azu taking silver in 10.16 to complete the third British one-two in the history of this event.

In third came a German sprinter competing under a different kind of cloud. While Owen Ansah denies any wrongdoing, his national anti-doping agency is calling for him to be banned for missing a drugs test.

Of course, it was all a little unexpected. The hot pre-race favourite was Marcell Jacobs, the 2021 Olympic champion and an Italian sprinter chasing a third consecutive European title. The 31-year-old certainly looked the sharpest in qualifying but he was slow out of the blocks and pulled up after about 50m, eventually trailing home in seventh in 12.26.

So much more was expected of the Italian police officer. This, after all, was a man who had snatched Olympic gold before an audience of masked journalists, coaches and officials in a locked down Tokyo five years ago, and the rather muted atmosphere must have been reassuringly familiar to the star attraction of the second evening session of these championships.

In fairness to the organisers, an attendance of just over 16,000 was an improvement on the crowd that had witnessed Hunt’s heroism. But it was still a pity to see so many sparsely populated areas of this 23,000-seat arena when the 100m final is usually among the hottest tickets in town.

Not that Glave seemed bothered. “It is an amazing feeling,” he told the BBC. “Just the work I put in to come here and execute my race. We have been working on my start, and I was able to execute that today. Upgrading from a bronze medal from 2024 is an amazing feeling.”

Azu said it was the British team’s hope to take all three medals, only for Louie Hinchliffe to fail in his bid for a place in the final. “We still got one-two,” said Azu. “We have Europe in a choke hold.”

Keely Hodgkinson ran her fastest time in a major championship heat yesterday and made it look remarkably easy, sporting a smart new pair of

Ramsay-Peaty’s fifth place ends 16-gold run but Shanahan seals

Craig Lord Paris

If Katie Shanahan was “so delighted” at breaking a British record that had stood for 17 years to claim European 200m backstroke gold in Paris last night, then Adam Ramsay-Peaty had quite a different take on his fifth place in the 100m breaststroke final.

The form guides of the Great Britain team-mates are racing in opposite directions as Ramsay-Peaty followed a disappointing fifth in his signature event by finishing fourth in the 4x100m mixed medley. Shanahan, meanwhile, romped home in a “crazy” 2:06.13.

Ramsay-Peaty’s 59.10 in the 100m breaststroke was 0.55sec quicker than when he won silver in the Commonwealth Games but paled in comparison to his world record of 56.88 set in 2019. Describing his dip as being “as boring as shit” the 31-year-old added: “The car just isn’t as fast. It’s almost like, you know, I’ve got— I’m driving the car really well. Yeah, it’s just the speed isn’t there. We just have to look at why.”

Until last night he had never lost a heat, semi-final or final while collecting 16 European golds but this time he finished half a second behind Nicolo Martinenghi, the same man who who had beaten him by an agonising 0.02sec to Olympic gold here two years ago. Filip Nowacki, his fellow Briton, was just 0.01sec away in sixth.

“I’m disappointed with the time because I didn’t get faster again,” added Ramsay-Peaty. “That is literally where my brain goes. It’s about the time now,

Ramsay-Peaty, 31, finished fifth in the 100m breaststroke final — his first loss ever at a European Aquatics Championships. He labelled his form as “boring”

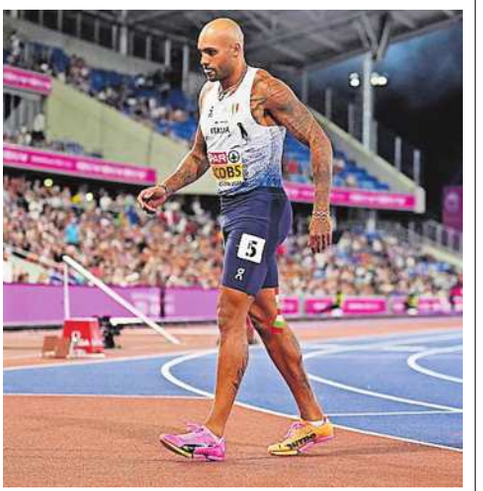
whereas before it was about the medals. It’s frustrating because I’m either side of that 59, and I know why. It’s just, again, the car just isn’t fast enough.”

He was, though, confident that he would turn things around: “We’ve only had 12 weeks [working with new coach Lisa Bates] to really improve it,” he added. “I obviously took a gamble on endurance, and it hasn’t really paid off. That’s why it’s boring for me: I put a lot of work in. You want to see a little bit of an outcome for that. You’re just like a craftsman at the end of the day. You can see the craft and you build it day by day. At the moment, it’s not building as I want it to, as fast as I want to.”

Shanahan said it would take a while for her victory to sink in. A prolific gold medal-winner in her junior days, with

Azu's 100m glory

ALEX LIVESEY, MICHAEL STEELE/BRITISH ATHLETICS/GETTY IMAGES: MIKE EGERTON/PA



Glave, left, celebrates winning the 100m, ahead of GB team-mate Azu, above, but it was a miserable night for Italy's Jacobs, right, who pulled up while attempting to win a third European title at the distance. Meanwhile, Hodgkinson, inset left, cruised through in the 800m heats

shades to complete her more casual look. "It's sunny out there," she said breezily. "I'm trying not to get wrinkles and stop the need for Botox too early."

On and off the track, the Olympic champion appeared to be in good form before the most eagerly anticipated event of the championships: the women's 800m final.

After winning the world indoor title and setting an indoor world record in March, Hodgkinson was left stunned by the sudden emergence of Audrey Werro. Hodgkinson was beaten in Stockholm in June by the Swiss, who ran the third-fastest time in history.

But the 24-year-old has come here claiming to have run a personal best in a recent training session in Portugal that she and her coach, Trevor Painter, used to measure her fitness.

She seemed extremely happy with her first-round performance in pursuit of what, indoors and outdoors, would be a fifth successive European title if she claims gold in the final on Friday.

She will lose the shades for that race. "It's going to be nearly 10pm and I want to see everything," she said. "I'm excited to showcase where I'm at and hopefully have the performance I know I'm capable of."

'crazy' win

Olympic youth and European junior titles in the backstroke and medley, she had a collection of silvers from her four years as a senior.

The latest of them came in the 200m backstroke for Scotland at a home Commonwealth Games.

Here she was much faster. The national standard had stood for 17 years and ten days, since Gemma Spofforth clocked 2:06.66 at Rome 2009.

"I've had my eye on that British record for quite a while now, and I knew that I was capable of it," said Shanahan. "But I feel like for the past few years, since I was a junior, I've kind of had 101 things that have got in my way, injuries and illnesses and that sort of thing. So to finally get it, I'm just so delighted. And yeah, it's, it's very special."

Fans charged £18 for pork roll

CONTINUED FROM BACK

an issue. Spectators are being charged £22.50 to use the park-and-ride, while it costs £17.50 for a park-and-walk option that involves a 45-minute hike to the arena. There have also been complaints about the food, with a barbecued pork roll costing £18.50.

A spokesperson for Birmingham 2026 defended the pricing, with 170,000 tickets sold and close to full capacity expected later in the week. Compared with football, it is cheap to see some of the most talented athletes this country has produced in decades.

The organisers stressed that 50 per cent of tickets were priced at £30 and lower, with adult tickets starting at £10. "Birmingham 2026 is delighted with ticket sales for the championships, which have far surpassed our targets," they said.

"Friday, Saturday and Sunday evening sessions are approaching sell-out, with several other sessions close to capacity. There are still opportunities to be part of the championships at incredibly good value."

Radio presenter Sonja McLaughlan cited her concerns on social media, with the top price due to rise to £150 for the last three days of competition.

"Actually a bit shocked at the type of prices being charged," she wrote. "It's a shame for the athletes, who deserve better. The sport has this precious window without football, free to air television exposure and it looks flat with such a sparse crowd."

Rocky Flintoff, 18, bats like dad to make history

Elizabeth Ammon

Rocky Flintoff became Lancashire's youngest ever centurion by smashing 123 from 76 balls in the county's Metro Bank One-Day Cup match against Somerset at Taunton.

The 18-year-old son of former England all-rounder Andrew "Freddie" Flintoff is an aggressive, hard-hitting right-handed batsman and dominated with the bat on Tuesday, crashing ten fours and seven sixes as Lancashire racked up 443 for six, their highest total in List A cricket. Coming in with his side 138 for three, he was the aggressor in a brutal partnership of 214 with captain Keaton Jennings and reached his century from only 65 balls.

Archie Vaughan, son of another Ashes hero in Michael Vaughan, was among the bowlers that Flintoff and his team-mates put to the sword as Lancashire ran out 174-run winners to set up a quarter-final at home to Durham on Friday.

Flintoff signed for Lancashire in 2024 before becoming their youngest player when he made his debut aged 16 years and 113 days in the One-Day Cup that summer. He also became England Under-19's youngest centurion during their series against Sri Lanka that year and, in early 2025, was the youngest century maker for England Lions aged 16 and 291 days, beating his father's record, in a match against a Cricket Australia XI.

His hundred against Somerset, his first professional ton for Lancashire, means he is their youngest first XI centurion at 18 years and 126 days, beating Archie MacLaren, who scored 108 against Sussex at Hove in August 1890 when he was 18 years and 256 days.

Flintoff missed most of the 2025 summer and last winter's Under-19 World Cup because of a back injury and had to withdraw from last summer's Hundred having been signed by Northern Superchargers, where his father was head coach.

He has returned this summer, playing mostly for Lancashire's second XI in early season, and scored three consecutive half-centuries for England Under-19 last month during their Youth ODI and Youth Test series against South Africa.

He has been a regular in Lancashire's first team during their One-Day Cup campaign and his maiden century for the county followed an unbeaten 61 from 51 balls against Warwickshire.

His father, Andrew, has been England Lions head coach for the past four years but has recently stepped down to take on other projects, including coaching in Australia's Big Bash League as well as non-cricket television endeavours. During his time in charge, Andrew selected Rocky for a couple of series including the one in Australia last winter. Now, having overcome his back issue, he is in line to be part of upcoming Lions series as well as continuing to play for England Under-19.

He has played five first-class matches in his career — four for Lancashire and one for the Lions — and averages 39.41 in 15 List A games. He is yet to play any T20 cricket. There were reports that he may move away from Lancashire to another county but he signed a two-year contract extension in March which keeps him at Old Trafford until at least 2028.

Rocky's batting style has been described as a mirror image of his father's, particularly through mid-wicket.

Flintoff's 123 off 76 balls, his first hundred for Lancashire, drew inevitable comparisons with his father, Andrew Flintoff, the Ashes hero, while earning his county a Metro Bank One-Day Cup quarter-final home tie

Gay's bid to prove fitness

Elizabeth Ammon

Emilio Gay will play in a three-day match against Pakistan starting tomorrow to test his fitness after sustaining a shoulder injury.

Scans over the weekend showed that the England opener had not suffered a serious injury but playing in this tour match will provide time to further assess whether there is any residual pain after he retired hurt while batting for Durham in the Metro Bank One-Day Cup last Friday.

England's first Test against Pakistan begins a week today at Headingley. England are confident that Gay will be fit and have not called anyone into the 16-man squad as cover. Ollie Pope is already in the squad as a spare batsman, although he would be unlikely to open the batting.

Shoaib Bashir is also in the Professional County squad that will play against Pakistan at Beckenham.

The game was due to be a four-day match starting today but in agreement with the Pakistan Cricket Board it was reduced to a three-day game to allow the ECB to pick the strongest squad they could, based on which counties had qualified for the One-Day Cup quarter-final matches which will be played on Friday.

Bashir is the only specialist spinner in England's 16-man squad for the first two Tests although he isn't guaranteed to be in the final XI. The retirement of Ben Stokes means England must rethink how to balance their side and they may pick four frontline seam bowlers with the part-time spin of Dan Lawrence, who will bat at No 6, and captain Joe Root instead of selecting Bashir.

ANTONIO VILLALBA/REAL MADRID/GETTY IMAGES

Two types of right back

The differences in their styles are obvious from these maps of their open-play touches for their clubs last season. Alexander-Arnold comes further inside far more than Dumfries, who stays wider and also tends to be more involved in the attacking third of the field

Alexander-Arnold open-play touches Real Madrid 2025-26

0% 0.2*	0% 0.0	0% 0.0	0% 0.1	1% 0.4	0% 0.2
0% 0.0	0% 0.0	0% 0.1	1% 0.4	0% 0.3	0% 0.1
1% 0.9	2% 1.3	1% 0.9	1% 0.9	1% 0.9	0% 0.1
1% 0.9	5% 3.5	6% 4.3	7% 5.2	6% 4.2	2% 1.4
3% 2.5	9% 6.8	13% 10.1	18% 13.7	16% 11.8	6% 4.2

Dumfries open-play touches Inter Milan 2025-26

0% 0.0	0% 0.0	0% 0.0	0% 0.0	1% 0.2	0% 0.1
0% 0.1	0% 0.1	0% 0.0	0% 0.0	0% 0.1	1% 0.3
2% 0.9	1% 0.2	0% 0.1	1% 0.2	1% 0.3	5% 1.8
1% 0.5	3% 1.2	3% 1.4	3% 1.2	2% 0.8	7% 2.8
3% 1.0	9% 3.5	14% 5.7	15% 5.8	19% 7.5	9% 3.7

*open-play touches per 90 Attacking Direction →

Alexander-Arnold, left, has been joined in Madrid by Dumfries, right, and upcoming friendly matches will offer clues as to whether Mourinho, below, believes he can accommodate the pair in the same side

Is Trent's best chance of thriving at Real Madrid to switch to midfield?

Ian Hawkey

Real Madrid's new club captain returned from his holidays, met the new head coach and reported how glad he felt to see everybody pulling in the right direction under José Mourinho. Fresh starts all round, then. It is only three months since Fede Valverde was having treatment in hospital after a training-ground fight with a team-mate, and being fined, along with his combatant Aurélien Tchouaméni, €500,000 (about £427,000) for the fracas.

Better still for Valverde, his initial conversations with Mourinho have included no suggestion that, in the season ahead, the Uruguay midfielder will be asked to fill in at right back, as Mourinho's predecessors have tended to demand of Valverde, to barely veiled irritation from the new skipper.

The Madrid right-back position can sometimes feel cursed. It has probably generated more angst than any other on the pitch through a turbulent period of four head coaches in 15 months and, in more than one case, sustained friction between management and players.

It's not been a role that much enhances an individual's international reputation either. Last season's pair of jousting specialists, Trent Alexander-Arnold and Dani Carvajal, found themselves excluded from their countries' summer World Cup squads, as clear a snub for Alexander-Arnold, who won the last of his 34 England caps just after he left Liverpool last summer — and was not invited to add to them even when other right backs dropped out of Thomas Tuchel's party — as it had been for Carvajal, who has 54 caps for Spain.

Carvajal, having been eclipsed in the Madrid hierarchy by Alexander-Arnold in the second half of 2025-26, has now left Real. He had begun his long association with the club as a ten-year-old almost a quarter of a century ago.

His departure vacated the captaincy, passing it on, by dint of longevity, to Valverde. His leaving also sets up a fresh duel for status on the right side of the back four. Alexander-Arnold no longer faces a challenge for a place in the starting XI from a feisty, popular veteran but from a powerful locomotive of a footballer. No sooner had Mourinho been confirmed as head coach than Madrid paid the first significant transfer fee – €20million to Inter Milan – of a busy pre-season of recruitment on Denzel Dumfries, the Dutch flyer.

We await clues about how Mourinho sees the hierarchy, or how far he can imagine a Madrid that accommodates both Alexander-Arnold, 27, and Dumfries, 30, in Madrid's upcoming warm-up games. Indications are that while he appreciates the broad range of options that full backs of such distinct skill sets as Alexander-Arnold and Dumfries can offer, the choice need not always be an either/or.

Dumfries, fresh from his break after representing the Netherlands at the World Cup, made his first friendly appearance for his new club against Fiorentina on August 1. He did so in a role more like that of a winger. Alexander-Arnold started too, playing deeper, more centrally and briefed to advance into midfield when Madrid were in possession.

For Dumfries, a wingback for the majority of his 200-odd matches for Inter, the selection was a vote of confidence, propelling him into the line-up after only five training sessions with Mourinho. For Alexander-Arnold, there were shades of past deployments, notably under Jürgen Klopp at Liverpool, when the player was in his early twenties and encouraged to utilise his precise passing more broadly than right-to-left diagonals or channelled right-flank through-balls. Alexander-Arnold, acting as auxiliary midfielder, contributed vitally in the build-up to Madrid's second goal of a 2-2 draw.

Dumfries had his moments, not all of them displaying the most velvet of first touches. Against Ferencvaros, in the next of Madrid's warm-ups, Dumfries retained his starting place, on the right of a more orthodox back four, replaced by Alexander-Arnold for the second half. Further work on the Trent-zel experiment, a game plan that dovetails their different strengths in the same side, had been left for another day.

Alexander-Arnold for Dumfries, Dumfries for Alexander-Arnold: however often Mourinho makes that switch in the months ahead, it is never going to look a like-for-like swap. From the Merseysider, Madridistas have already learnt, even from his stop-start debut year, that you get an unusually high yield of decisive passes from a full back along with one or two moments of anguish at how much space may be left open behind him for an opponent to counterattack. Dumfries, going forward, will alarm plenty of La Liga left backs in direct confrontations but offer fewer guarantees than Alexander-Arnold with the quality of his delivery.

Their essential career statistics tell the story. Over the course of Alexander-Arnold's 400-plus senior club matches for Liverpool and Madrid, he's contributed well over one assist every four games on average.

Dumfries, closing in on 500 outings from his combined stints at Sparta Rotterdam, Heerenveen, PSV Eindhoven and Inter, is well down on that. But he scores more goals — 27 across three seasons at Inter — and different sorts of goals. He's useful at meeting an attacking set piece, just as Alexander-Arnold can look almost peerless at delivering them.

Madrid supporters have glimpsed the best of Alexander-Arnold, but sporadically. Two lay-offs with injury restricted him to 28 appearances in 2025-26, and with Carvajal also suffering fitness issues, often at the same time as Alexander-Arnold, Valverde was obliged, with undisguised reluctance, to fill in for periods at right back. He generally does so with energy and vigour. But by January, when Álvaro Arbeloa became the second head coach of Alexander-Arnold's Madrid career, Xabi Alonso having been sacked after eight months, there was recognition that the England player was a special sort of defender.

"Not your typical full back who is always on the wing," Arbeloa said. "He can play inside, shift around, change positions, open up or close in according to what's needed at that moment." And that the acquisition of a player capable of such accuracy with a pass made great sense in a team built around the breaking speed of Vinícius Júnior and Kylian Mbappé.

For the new La Liga season, which Madrid will start a week later than most, on August 22, there will be another super-sprinter up front, Yan Diomande, bought from RB Leipzig for a club-record fee that could rise to €140million. Diomande is earmarked for the outside right role of Mourinho's front three, a 19-year-old eager to establish a strong working relationship with whichever full back is assigned to his flank.

One targeted signing not coming to Madrid is Rodri, the Spain captain, who has said "no" to joining the Mourinho project and who the club had hoped would give them some of the midfield authority that a series of Real coaches have longed for since Toni Kroos retired in the summer of 2024.

The hiring of Bernardo Silva may be part of the solution. Coaxing Alexander-Arnold into territories where he can be a go-to creative conduit, Mourinho has hinted, may just be another.

Chelsea eye Lewis-Skelly as Arsenal ponder cashing in

Gary Jacob

MICHAEL REGAN/PREMIER LEAGUE/GETTY IMAGES

Lewis-Skelly helped Arsenal win the title last season but his chances may be limited after the arrival of Guimarães

Chelsea are interested in signing Myles Lewis-Skelly if Arsenal decide to reap the profit from a homegrown talent this summer.

The 19-year-old midfielder, who graduated from the Arsenal academy, has been offered to Chelsea and Manchester United. Lewis-Skelly wants to stay at Arsenal, where he signed a long-term contract last summer, but he and the club would have a decision to make if they receive a bid.

Chelsea could need a midfielder if Enzo Fernández leaves this summer. Arsenal want to recoup money in the transfer market and selling homegrown talent helps clubs comply with financial rules. Lewis-Skelly appeared to make reference to the speculation about his future 11 weeks ago when he posted a photo of himself holding the Premier League trophy accompanied by a caption that read "pure profit".

Lewis-Skelly, who has played mostly at left back, was peripheral for much of last season and seemed likely to leave before he impressed in midfield in the title run-in, going on to start in the Champions League final defeat by Paris Saint-Germain.

However, the Londoner has surely fallen down the pecking order again after Arsenal signed Bruno Guimarães for £75million last week. Their other defensive midfield options are Declan Rice, Martín Zubimendi and potentially Mikel Merino. Arsenal's attacking midfield options include Martin Odegaard and Eberechi Eze.

Arsenal have been led to believe that Chelsea are interested in signing Lewis-Skelly, who has six England caps. However, Lewis-Skelly would have to factor in Chelsea's numerous midfield options and opportunities could be limited as they are not in Europe this season.

Manchester United have also been sounded out. An intermediary offered Lewis-Skelly to the club, among others, at the start of the year, saying that he would cost about £60million — a price at which United balked.

Lewis-Skelly broke through at left back but had a tough second campaign. He expressed frustration about his limited opportunities to the manager Mikel Arteta after starting only two league games by the start of May.

But his fortunes changed after he was given a first senior start playing as a left-sided No 8 in the 3-0 win over Fulham in May. Arteta admitted he had not been sure previously if the teenager was ready for the position but described his performance as "incredible".

Lewis-Skelly started four more games in that role, including the victory over Atletico Madrid in the Champions League semi-final, second leg.

At Arsenal's title parade in Islington, Lewis-Skelly was seen having a lengthy chat with Andrea Berta, the club's sporting director. He has been represented by his mother, Marcia Lewis, a Fifa-registered agent and the founder of the No1Fan.club, a platform to help parents navigate academy football.

It is likely Arteta would be annoyed if he thought the interest in Lewis-Skelly had been engineered to determine whether he had a future at the club — and in which role. Lewis-Skelly has said he now sees himself as a midfielder. He played as a left back when he scored 20 minutes into his senior England debut against Albania and was a PFA young player of the year nominee in 2025.

If Lewis-Skelly stays, it is likely he would only start games to give a breather to Rice and Zubimendi, who both looked fatigued at the end of last season. Rice, 27, was carrying a hamstring issue during the World Cup.

Arteta has spent a net £650 million on signings since 2022 and the club's target is to become self-sustaining in the long term.

There is a similar discussion about whether to sell Ethan Nwaneri, 19, the attacking midfielder who came through the ranks with Lewis-Skelly and also struggled for minutes. Nwaneri had a disappointing loan at Marseille starting in January and has interest from clubs in Germany. But there is a case for him only to move on loan and wait for Arsenal to phase out Odegaard, 27, and Eze, 28, in time.

Barça make new £51m Rodri offer

Paul Hirst, Paul Joyce

Barcelona are set to step up their interest in Rodri by submitting a second offer, worth more than £51 million, for the Manchester City midfielder.

Talks between the clubs have continued since City rejected Barcelona's bid of £38.5 million for the World Cup winner last week. Barcelona are now ready to come back with a second offer worth a guaranteed €60 million (about £51 million) plus add-ons.

It remains to be seen whether City will accept it. They had been holding out for £60 million for the 30-year-old Spain midfielder. But Barcelona's second bid demonstrates that they are determined to push on with their pursuit of the 2024 Ballon d'Or winner.

The Times reported on Monday that the Spanish champions were hopeful of signing Rodri in the next few days so he can integrate himself into the squad for the upcoming season. The five players who are yet to report for pre-season training — Jules Koundé, Dani Olmo, Pau Cubarsí, Lamine Yamal and Pedri — are set to return to Barça's headquarters today. Barcelona face Basel in a friendly on Sunday, a week before they begin their title defence against Elche.

Barça are in a hurry to seal Rodri deal

Ferran Torres, who scored the winning goal in the World Cup final against Argentina, was also due to return to training today, but it appears the winger will move to Paris Saint-Germain, who are expected to come back with an improved offer after their opening bid of £34 million, plus £8.5 million in add-ons, was rejected.

Like Torres, Rodri has a year left on his contract and has not shown any desire to extend his deal.

Sport Uefa Super Cup

Emery faces fierce early test

Charlotte Duncker

As he enters his fourth full season at Aston Villa, Unai Emery is preparing for yet another "new era" in his career.

The 54-year-old has always made it clear he is not afraid of a challenge, and it is a good job, really. His first is a meeting against his former side Paris Saint-Germain in today's Super Cup as the Champions League and Europa League winners go head to head for another piece of silverware — but on the horizon is a bigger test.

It has already been another summer of transition for Villa, and that is still with more than two weeks of the transfer window remaining. Tonight's team will be without World Cup contingent Ollie Watkins, Ezri Konsa and Emiliano Martínez, but even taking their absences into consideration this is going to be a very different team from the one who lifted the Europa League trophy in May.

The most influential player, Morgan Rogers, who played the most minutes for the club last season, made a £117 million move to Chelsea, midfield regular Youri Tielemans signed for Manchester United while first-choice left back Lucas Digne returned to PSG.

But as a new dawn begins at Villa there is no concern from their captain, John McGinn, about the rebuilding job ahead.

"A lot has changed in the eight years that I've been here," the captain said. "We've got a structure in place, we've got standards and rules that have made us successful over the past few seasons and our job is just to integrate the new players and try to make them believe, the same way the players of the last few seasons have believed, and we're really excited by this new Aston Villa."

There have been arrivals in the shape of Alejandro Garnacho (on loan from Chelsea), midfielder João Gomes, who signed from Wolverhampton Wanderers, and club-record signing Johan Manzambi, though he is struggling with a knee injury and isn't available.

Emery warned that his team "won't be in our best moment" against PSG and this is unlikely to be the same level of performance witnessed at Villa Park in that infamous 3-2 victory in April 2025. But that is only natural given it is the start of August, they are missing three key players and they have yet to complete their transfer business.

The game, which will be refereed by Omar Artan, the Somali referee who was supposed to officiate at the World Cup but got turned away at the border, is a reward for Villa's first European title since 1983. It will help them financially, earning them £3.4 million, but on the pitch it's a free hit. Only 39 per cent of Europa League winners have emerged victorious against their Champions League rivals in this fixture. Win and it's a great confidence boost heading into a season of change and the unknown, lose and it is really just a friendly to test this new-look team against the best in Europe.

For Emery it is another chance to face Luis Enrique in this competition. The Villa boss, who has lost three times in the Super Cup with Villarreal and Sevilla, relishes the opportunity to face the man who beat him in the 2015 version of this fixture.

It is because the Spaniard believes Enrique "demands a lot of him" with the teams he puts out, so perhaps is it the perfect curtain-raiser for the Villa head coach to really test himself.

It is possible Konsa could leave for Arsenal before the deadline, and three of Emery's trusted backroom staff have already departed — set-piece coach Austin MacPhee, to Chelsea, assistant manager Pako Ayestarán and individual coach Antonio Rodríguez Saravia — so this really is a new era for Villa.

"We must all be on the same page. Even with the changes," Emery said. "When they were in the Championship and every year since, there have been changes and still the club has moved forward. If we compare ourselves to other clubs like Man City, Chelsea, Manchester United, Arsenal and Liverpool, we are competing with them. We don't have their power … yet. But progressively we are doing [it] our way.

"We don't compare with other clubs. Sometimes they are above us, sometimes below us. Now we are making changes, yes, but we are working well. I am happy with how we are responding."

Emery has responded to everything that has been thrown at him since he arrived nearly five years ago and there is belief from the squad he can do it again.

So what can Villa fans expect this season? Should they temper their expectations because it has been a summer of change?

"We will have our challenges," McGinn said. "There is a lot of change, but when you look at other clubs around England there is a lot of change there as well. A lot of coaches changing, a lot of players changing. But what we have still is our main core — same manager, same methods, same desire to achieve more.

"A lot of people thought we had reached our ceiling a couple of seasons ago, and we proved them wrong. We have still got the same hunger and desire to go and achieve more. And as long as we've got the hunger and desire to do that, the Aston Villa fans can expect as much as possible."

Villa's XI for the Europa League final against Freiburg on May 20 featured three key players who are no longer at the club — Digne has signed for tonight's opponents PSG, Rogers went to Chelsea and Tielemans joined Man United

Villa's summer transfers

In	From	Fee
J Manzambi	Freiburg	£59.5m
J Gomes	Wolves	£38.0m
M Kéba Cissé	LASK	£4.0m
A Garnacho	Chelsea	Loan
Out	**To**	**Fee**
M Rogers	Chelsea	£117.0m
Y Tielemans	Man United	£35.0m
D Malen	Roma	£21.6m
E Barrenechea	Benfica	£10.3m
L Dobbin	Southampton	£9.0m
L Digne	PSG	£8.5m
J Gauci	Lincoln City	Loan
A García	Getafe	Loan
O Zych	Vitoria	Loan
Spent		£101.5m
Received		£201.4m

Aston Villa v PSG

UEFA Super Cup
Kick-off 8pm, Red Bull Arena, Salzburg
TV TNT Sports **Referee** O Artan (Somalia)

Aston Villa (probable 4-2-3-1)

(probable 4-3-3) **PSG**

Newcastle are suffering

Martin Hardy

Newcastle's new head coach Matthias Jaissle has conceded that he has inherited a leadership vacuum at the club after the summer sales of Bruno Guimarães and Sandro Tonali.

The 38-year-old German was speaking at his official introduction at St James' Park yesterday after leading the players through a training camp in La Manga last week and a friendly away to Valencia.

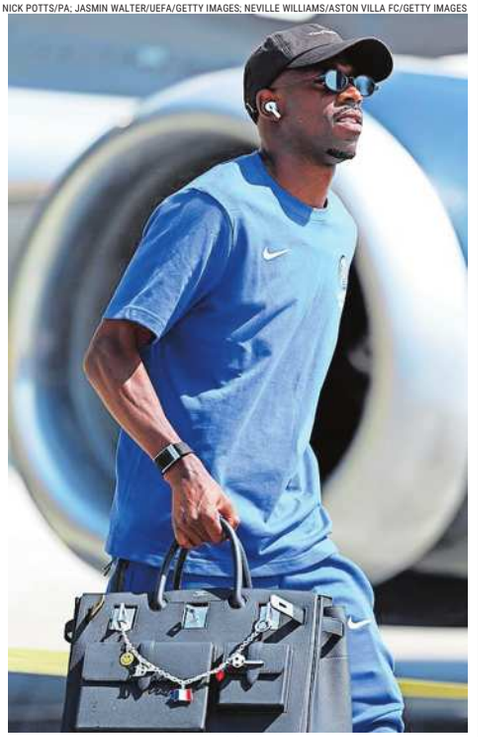
Jaissle spoke of his excitement after the first call from Newcastle at the end of last month about the possibility of taking over from Eddie Howe and insisted there was still huge ambition.

However, he admitted the sales this summer of Guimarães to Arsenal and Tonali to Tottenham Hotspur, which followed Anthony Gordon's move to Barcelona and the decision not to renew Kieran Trippier's contract, had had an impact on the experience of his squad.

Newcastle have moved for the 31-year-old former Tottenham Hotspur midfielder Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg, although so far they have failed to agree terms. They are also monitoring João Palhinha, also 31, although it is unlikely that they will compete with Aston Villa for the player, for whom Bayern Munich are demanding £26 million. Newcastle have so far bought five

# of new Villa era

NICK POTTS/PA; JASMIN WALTER/UEFA/GETTY IMAGES; NEVILLE WILLIAMS/ASTON VILLA FC/GETTY IMAGES



McGinn, left, leads the Villa training session yesterday in preparation for meeting Dembele, above, in a game that will be refereed by

Omar Artan, the Somali official who missed the chance to referee at the World Cup after being denied a visa by the US

from a leadership vacuum – Jaissle

players this summer, with the oldest being 24.

"Everyone knows the players that left the club," Jaissle said. "They were great characters, great players, experienced players. This is now a vacuum as you call it. But that just means that other players have to step in. Either, we have to adjust something in the squad by signing these profile of players, or other players need to step up and fill these positions and these leadership roles.

"I am quite optimistic that we can work with both scenarios, and my job is to do the best out of it all. We are aware of what we need and the squad that we want. We believe in the players we have now. Against Valencia we were really happy [with] the young lads getting the chance, so that's also the approach from this club."

Jaissle, for whom Newcastle paid Al-Ahli £9.4 million in compensation, was shown around St James' Park for the first time since signing his four-year contract on Sunday and walked through the city on Monday.

He was asked what his remit is at Newcastle. "That we are ambitious," he replied. "That is the most important thing. It is why I decided to come here, but this will not happen overnight, especially when you have such a big transition phase now.

"You need to have a clear goal and wish of where we want to go to. That starts from the decision-makers, the management and the board. Then, if you have that synergy with the fans, the players and the staff to go there, then I'm pretty sure it will be a successful story. But we need time now."

Jaissle, who was confrontational in the technical area at his previous clubs, Al-Ahli and RB Salzburg, said: "I will not change my style because that's my personality. On the touchline, I am emotional, but I need to respect a bit more the box [manager's area].

"I had a long line in Saudi Arabia, so I think the GPS would be quite high if I had worn it!"

Newcastle face Everton in a friendly at Murrayfield this afternoon.

Wirtz insists he'll 'shine more' after tough first season

Paul Joyce

Florian Wirtz believes he is primed to make a greater impact at Liverpool after absorbing the lessons of a difficult debut campaign in the Premier League.

The 23-year-old spoke with renewed enthusiasm about the looming challenge of propelling the club to fresh heights under the new head coach Andoni Iraola, who intends to play him as a No10.

Wirtz joined Liverpool from Bayer Leverkusen in a £116 million deal last summer. However, his season was underwhelming, just as it was for the vast majority of first-team players as Liverpool's title defence crumbled and they finished fifth, leading to the dismissal of Arne Slot.

Wirtz offered moments of promise and ended with seven goals and ten assists in 49 appearances, but too often appeared inhibited by the unique demands of the English top flight coupled with the collective malaise which engulfed the team. Much rests on the Germany international now showcasing his best and there have been glimpses in pre-season of his eye for a pass and his willingness to attack the six-yard box in search of goals.

He is no longer taking a step into the unknown and, reflecting on last term, he said: "I definitely learnt a lot. I just learnt how Premier League football is played and I am more ready for my second season because I know how it is now. I am really excited for my next season.

"I've played one year now in England and I've said often enough that it's a different style of football than in Germany. You just get used to the games and your opponents.

"[It is a] difficult question [to assess my first season] but, of course, there were some games when I wasn't happy with myself, but also a lot of games when I felt good on the pitch. Last season was difficult for the whole club but, hopefully, we have the right energy and mentality this season, so every player can shine more."

Wirtz's partnership with the striker Alexander Isak will be central to Liverpool's hopes and the pair must take on the burden of scoring the goals Mohamed Salah once provided.

Isak endured similar struggles to Wirtz after his £125 million move from Newcastle United, and failed to meet expectations, although a broken leg, which ruled him out for almost five months, did not help his cause.

It has been noticeable during the latter part of pre-season that Iraola has stationed Wirtz and Isak close together on the pitch and their understanding is starting to blossom as a result.

The problem has been at the other end of the field, where Liverpool have leaked goals.

"We had some good combinations," Wirtz said about playing with Isak. "We created some chances together. He is a very, very good player and I enjoy playing with him. We have to work on the connection but we are still in pre-season and until now it is good."

Slot deployed Wirtz as a No10 but also off the left at times and in other roles as he searched in vain for a convincing formula. It is the intention of Iraola to persist with Wirtz behind Isak, while Liverpool believe that if they recruit pace in wide areas — Paris Saint-Germain's Bradley Barcola remains a target — opportunities for Wirtz to cast his spell during matches will improve.

"We spoke about this because it is important to know which position you are going to play," Wirtz added. "I know I can probably play different positions but No10 is my favourite and my best position.

"We are looking forward to working with him [Iraola]. I like the idea of football he has."

Wirtz describes No 10 as his "favourite and best position"

Trump throws his support behind 'fantastic' Infantino

CONTINUED FROM BACK

Gianni Infantino. He is fantastic, having just presided over the most successful World Cup, by four times, ever presented. If he is gone, it will never be as successful or profitable again."

Infantino is the subject of an ethics complaint from the Norwegian FA about alleged political interference relating to Fifa's decision to lift the suspension of the USA striker Folarin Balogun, which occurred after a phone call from Trump. He is also facing complaints to Fifa's ethics committee about his relationship with Trump over his creation of a peace prize awarded to the US president.

Trump's claim that the 2026 World Cup was four times more successful than any other is not accurate — its revenues were twice those of 2022.

Infantino told colleagues this year that the 64-team expansion proposal would not be taken up but said last month it would "definitely" be considered. Fifa has sent a research brief on the proposal to agencies saying it wants to appoint one to analyse the plan. The brief dated July 30, seen by The Times, said the analysis should "not advocate for a predetermined outcome".

It added: "A 64-team format could create broader representation, new national market entry points and additional premium content. It could also affect tournament quality, qualification pathways, player workload, the international calendar, media economics, sponsor activation, fan attention and the positioning of other football and sports properties.

"The analysis should enable a clear strategic judgment: does a 64-team format expand global relevance and participation in a way that strengthens the football economy, or do dilution, calendar congestion, execution complexity and saturation undermine the proposition."

Sport

José's plan for Trent

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Chelsea at front of queue if Arsenal cash in on teen

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Infantino to back 64-team World Cup

- Fifa president seeks South American support
- Trump warns against removing embattled chief

Martyn Ziegler Chief Sports Reporter

Fifa's under-pressure president Gianni Infantino has indicated to South American football leaders that he will support their proposal to expand the 2030 World Cup to 64 teams, according to sources.

Infantino is trying to rally support wherever he can to hold onto his position in the face of calls from Uefa, Concacaf and the Asian football confederation for him to resign, in the hope of surviving until next year's election. Mexico is the only one of Concacaf's 35 Fifa members to come out in support so far.

Conmebol, the South American confederation, has proposed the expansion from 48 to 64 teams in order to be able to host more than the three games it has been awarded by Fifa to mark the centenary of the first World Cup in Uruguay. Infantino visited Colombia on Friday for the inauguration of the country's new right-wing president Abelardo de la Espriella, who has been endorsed by Donald Trump. The US president said yesterday that Fifa would be making a "terrible mistake" if it got rid of Infantino following the World Cup sell-off debacle.

Infantino was accompanied by the Conmebol president Alejandro Domínguez, from Paraguay, who told Colombian media that "one cannot ignore the great work" done by Infantino. Sources said the 64-team expansion plan was discussed during the trip. Fifa declined to comment but pointed out any decision would be made by Fifa's Council rather than Infantino himself.

The 2030 World Cup is being mainly hosted by Spain, Portugal and Morocco with a match each scheduled for Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay.

The Times reported last week that, according to sources with knowledge of the discussions, Infantino will support Morocco's desire to host the final ahead of Madrid, but Fifa said it was "false and misleading to claim the Fifa president has made any promise" in relation to the final and that a decision would be made by Fifa's statutory bodies.

Meanwhile, reports in Mexico have said the Mexican federation's endorsement of Infantino was as a result of expected support for its bid to leave Concacaf and join South America, which would mean more regular matches against the likes of Argentina and Brazil.

Trump had not spoken about Infantino, despite their close connections, in the two weeks since The Times broke the news about the scheme to sell stakes in the World Cup to private investors — which plunged the Fifa president into a desperate fight for survival. He has now broken his silence and writing in a post on his Truth Social platform he referred to the financial success of the 2026 World Cup.

Trump wrote: "Fifa would be making a terrible mistake if, for any reason, they even considered replacing president

Continued on page 59

ALEX LIVESEY/BRITISH ATHLETICS/GETTY IMAGES

Glave is Europe's sprint king

Romell Glave raced to 100m gold and Jeremiah Azu took silver on a fantastic night for Britain at the European Championships, pages 54-55

Keely coach hits out over £150 tickets

Matt Lawton Chief Sports Correspondent

The organisers of the European Athletics Championships have come under fire for low attendances in the first three sessions, with Keely Hodgkinson's coach and Amy Hunt's agent among those citing high ticket prices of as much as £150.

Hunt won European gold in the women's 100m on Monday night in front of half-empty stands, with BBC commentator Steve Cram expressing his dismay. "A little disappointing in terms of spectators, I have to say that," he said in response to Hunt's triumph. "Particularly down the back straight there. There's not very many people at all in those stands."

The Birmingham 2026 organising committee, run principally by British athletics chiefs, insists there were 13,000 fans in the stadium on Monday night but the 23,000-capacity Alexander Stadium looked less than half full, with the timing unfortunate given the London bid team are due to make their pitch for the 2029 World Championships to Lord Coe and his colleagues at World Athletics on Friday.

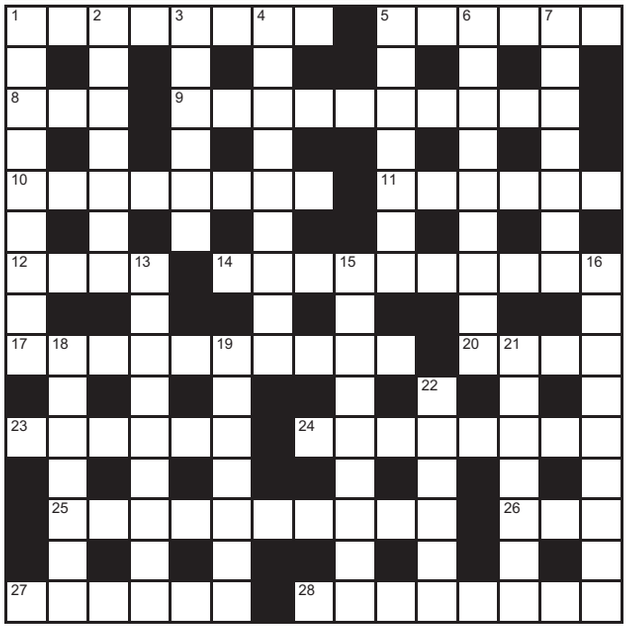
For the early sessions, category A tickets in the main stand have been priced at £110, with category B tickets costing £90. Strangely, there has been a better occupancy of those seats than the £40 and £60, category D and C, tickets. "Crazy prices," wrote Hunt's agent, Nick Harwell, in a post on X. "Such a shame."

Jenny Meadows, who with her husband, Trevor Painter, coaches Olympic 800m champion Hodgkinson and the favourite for the women's 1,500m, Georgia Hunter Bell, said on the same platform: "Hearing from fans re high ticket prices, parking issues and people not knowing it was taking place."

Birmingham city centre does feel a little light on promotion, with access to the Alexander Stadium also seemingly

Continued on page 55

Times Crossword 29,619



ACROSS

1 F1 driver leaving hotel in Bow, or somewhere else in London? (8)
5 Hard worker from city of Paris (6)
8 Agent regularly offends (3)
9 Frances's empty day unravelling costume (5,5)
10 What saves time is suggestion of copper? (5,3)
11 Distinction one craves, reportedly (6)
12 Bondage of peasant never-ending (4)
14 Chance western must be given new beginning (10)
17 Those returning members choose to speak (10)
20 Teresa uncertainly restraining hairy man (4)
23 Sex twists in court case (6)
24 Humiliated and given low mark, I hear (8)
25 Losing head, run off with Polish rascal (10)
26 First mate never taking jacket off (3)
27 Little one really making Charlie nervous at first (6)
28 Sly Asian sabotaged investigation (8)

DOWN

1 Magazine of old on chic way of conducting oneself (9)
2 State of the Union? (7)
3 Force as yet skipping shelter (6)
4 Presenter's article on new Republican carrying little weight (9)
5 Barber swayed and walked unsteadily (7)
6 Order European to support island party in show of respect (9)
7 Courts going round American state (7)
13 Cook a nice dahl and another dish (9)
15 At sea mostly (2,3,4)
16 Doctor slanders university washerwoman (9)
18 I am troubled about offspring's affair (7)
19 Dispensing with hat, initially get too hot in gorge (7)
21 Heartache of daughter when getting up before noon on English boat (7)
22 Nightmare examination holding back Miliband? (6)

Yesterday's solution 29,618

F	A	N	C	Y	T	H	A	T	■	W	H	O	O	P
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TIMES 2

August 12 | **2026**

I went public with my egg freezing (just like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez)

by Sophia Money-Coutts

It's not vertical drinking that should be banned in pubs — it's cocktails

Carol Midgley

I don't mean to be rude, but which lummox dreamt up the idea of banning drinkers in London from standing up while enjoying a pint? I'd love to know, but since I have zero clout at Westminster city council I can only guess. And I bet it's the type of person who barely goes to pubs, but if they do, shamelessly occupies a prime table all night having bought one poxy blackcurrant and soda then says: "Isn't it strange how pubs are dying on their arses?"

Do I sound tetchy? Sorry. It's probably because I had a few last night — while standing on those things at the end of my legs known as "feet". The New York Post has caught on to this madness, its reporter writing: "You'll have to sit down for this one... The UK council for the heart of London is pushing a bonkers new policy that would ban drinkers from standing up while having a drink." It calls it a "bizarre" bid to cut down on drunkenness.

It has come to something when Americans, who practically offer you the number of a detox clinic if you reach for a second glass of wine, are schooling us in how to drink properly. But they're right that it's bizarre. It ignores why pubs were invented in the first place and seeks to reverse generations of cultural hardwiring at one joyless stroke.

It's as though they have seen groups of smiling people standing in the sunshine in the streets of Soho and thought, "They look happy. Let's put a stop to it immediately!" In a draft statement on licensing policy Westminster council suggests removing "opportunities for vertical drinking", introducing "fixed seating" and, the absolute horror, waiter service only. Why not erect Perspex screens like in Covid times, thereby sucking the pleasure out of life entirely?

Don't get me wrong, often I love sitting down in pubs, especially with female friends or if I'm wearing high heels, which these days is never. But I also love standing up. There is an intense camaraderie to be found in standing groups, a vibe that is diluted the minute everyone sits.

It means you can move around and talk to different people and away from anyone who is becoming a drunken

bore (I bet a few have tap-danced away from me over the decades, oh yes). As for waiter service — that would kill the atmosphere stone dead. It stops being a pub and becomes a French-style bar where you spend 30 minutes being completely ignored.

If they must start banning things they should start with QR codes, those heinous overhangs from lockdown that kill conversation because everyone must scrabble for their phones to scan a soulless little square.

Ordering drinks from a data matrix will be the death of pubs. And please ban groups of young people from ordering and paying for their drinks *individually*. Buy in rounds, tightwads! You might end up 90p down, but it won't kill you. And don't queue in a straight line. You're not waiting for the 82 bus.

Ban very loud coffee machines and tearing up beer mats, and make anyone who wants a cocktail that takes 20 minutes of faffing to concoct queue in a separate place. Preferably down the street.

But if you want pubs to survive, never ban stand-up drinking. Or seats. A mixture of both is, and always has been, the perfect formula.

A favourite table can be important to regular drinkers. Such as the former Python Graham Chapman, a seismically heavy drinker, who was so fond of his preferred table at the Angel Inn, Highgate, that if anyone else sat there he would walk over, unzip his fly and dunk his penis in their drink until they moved. To be fair I bet that strategy had a zero failure rate.

Meghan can keep her islands

Do you have two kitchen islands? I don't even have one. But the Duchess of Sussex has two so now it's a "status symbol".

Is it? Or does it just mean your kitchen is so colossal you can't think of anything else to fill it with? Meghan also has a balloon-arched crafting barn, but is House Beautiful telling us to get one of them?

I blame TV drama for fetishising the island. It signals: "I'm a middle-class character whose island has soft-close drawers that hide the disgusting kitchen bin so it doesn't look gross when I drop my Spanx for the obligatory sex session." Two islands says only this to me: "More surfaces to clean. More clutter."

I used to have a little island actually, or thought I did until a guest sniffily said it was a "peninsula" (that was me told!). I don't miss it.

So I'm not jealous of Meghan slaloming around hers all day. They seem to me about as useful as those other "must-haves" such as bagel slicers, egg separators, herb scissors and banana guards — God's way of telling you you have too much money.

Zoom's call of nature

Would you join a work Zoom meeting with your underwear drying behind your head? Jo Galer, a New Zealand politician, did. Footage, now viral, shows her joining a council meeting from a bathroom, her laundry displayed for all to see.

"We can see your washing," said the mayor. But did Galer "give AF", to quote Gen Z? She did not. She shrugged, and carried on.

Some say it shows personal boundaries are eroding, but I say a) it's sometimes hard to find a quiet room and b) this is nothing compared to "Jennifer", the employee who forgot herself during a work Zoom, took her laptop to the lavatory and wazzed freely.

In Peru in 2021 a lawyer, not realising he was still in view during a Zoomed court hearing, was seen having sex with a naked woman, believed to be his client. Well, at least she can always say she got a full debriefing.

Like AOC I froze my eggs. Will it be worth it?

The congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez has posted an image of herself injecting on Instagram. Sophia Money-Coutts is proud of her

It's quite the sight: a woman touted as a potential future president, on a sofa, shooting up. She pinches a roll of her stomach between forefinger and thumb; the needle slides in like a knife into butter.

The New York congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez has called injecting herself "badass", but we're not talking heroin. The Democrats haven't totally lost the plot. Instead, she recently announced that she was embarking on a round of egg freezing and will be documenting every step online, including stabbing herself with synthetic hormones.

"This is a choice that I am making to feel more in control of my life," she said on Instagram. "As women in general, we are not taught about our bodies," AOC, 36, went on, explaining why she wanted to document her experience so publicly. "I want you all to see that, because women can do anything. And I think it's badass that I'm gonna be giving myself shots in the green room."

Whenever I see a high-profile woman talk about egg freezing it makes me want to punch the air and cheer (and sometimes I do). Because in 2020 I went through the process and made a diary podcast series about it. Nowadays, potential presidential candidates as well as celebrities including Rita Ora, Florence Pugh and Kristen Stewart talk about their experience of the grisly process in interviews. But a mere six years ago such transparency was less common.

I decided to witter openly about my ovaries because, not long before undergoing my round of egg freezing, I helped a friend to do the same. Could I possibly pick her up from hospital after her egg retrieval, she asked, because she hadn't told any of her family that she was going through it. As a single thirtysomething my friend felt too embarrassed to tell them. We no longer live in Jane Austen's Britain, though doesn't it sometimes feel as if we do? My brilliant, brave, highly successful friend was trying to protect her fertility. Yet egg freezing felt like something shameful, an admission that she was different from everyone getting married and having babies "normally", so she kept it a secret.

I was 35, newly single and emboldened to do the same. Except I wanted to shout about it. I wanted to investigate the process, partly out of curiosity but also to help others in the same situation to feel less like an old maid themselves. I recorded the process for my 11-part podcast *Freezing Time* — storing my drugs in the fridge beside my niece's Frubes (I was living with my sister), crying about going through it alone in a therapy session, weeping in my bedroom when the needle wouldn't sink into my pin-cushion stomach.

In my determination to be less embarrassed about egg freezing I talked about it loudly and often. At a drinks party, when a well-meaning family friend asked if I had a nice "chap" on the go, I gesticulated towards my pelvis and said I was undergoing egg freezing. When I winced during a barbecue a friend of my sister's asked if I was OK and I replied I had sore and swollen ovaries. Put him right off his sausage, that did.

In the past five years egg-freezing rates have soared. According to the most recent statistics from Britain's fertility authority, the HFEA (Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority), there were 2,500 rounds in the UK in 2020 and 7,000 in 2024. The number of British women undergoing egg freezing has nearly tripled as the process has become more mainstream. It's not unusual to see clinics advertising on the Tube or pushing ads on social media. Companies including Meta, Amazon and Goldman Sachs may now offer it as part of an employee's health package.

It's an expensive con trick that preys on vulnerable women and is designed to keep them chained to their desks, cry those who insist egg-freezing success rates remain low. A few months before I went through my round of injections the fertility king Lord Winston went on Radio 4 and stated that the number of eggs that resulted in a "live birth" (horrid phrase) hovered at about 1 per cent.

COVER AND BELOW: DAN KENNEDY FOR THE TIMES; GETTY IMAGES

Sophia Money-Coutts. Left: Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

Ocasio-Cortez's Instagram post

This was disputed by the HFEA, which claimed that the figure was closer to 20 per cent, but still, they may seem depressing stats if you're wondering whether to spend all that money (my round cost nearly £5,000; AOC hasn't revealed how much it will cost but said she'd been saving up for some time since it's not included in her health insurance).

Look, egg freezing is no guarantee of a baby down the line, but all reputable clinics should clearly point that out. Mine, the Lister, did multiple times. Part of the problem when computing success rates is that women of all ages tend to be lumped in together, distorting the numbers.

What you need to do, if interested, and as with any serious and expensive medical procedure, is take your age into account and look at the statistics. The HFEA advises that patients look at the success rates for IVF cycles with patients using their own eggs, "as there are much, much higher numbers of fresh embryo transfers each year compared to egg freezing". Also, here's a nerdy fact I learnt while making my podcast: if you're a woman in your mid to late thirties trying to get pregnant naturally, the chances are between 10 and 20 per cent each month. In short, it's harder to get knocked up than our teachers at school had us believe.

I was lucky — aged 35, after a couple of weeks of injecting and blowing up like the Michelin Man, I got 22 eggs, which would give me a 70-90 per cent chance of "at least" one baby should I want to use them. AOC is a year older than I was, so should she get a similar number of eggs, her chances would be roughly the same. There persists a belief that you should freeze embryos, not eggs, because embryos thaw better and are much more likely to prove successful. Perhaps she will, seeing as she has a fiancé. For me, as a single woman, the financial and emotional idea of choosing a stranger's sperm off the internet was a step too far. Embryos aren't necessarily more successful, my patient doctor insisted when I clarified this for the 93rd time. "I couldn't sit here and recommend egg freezing were it otherwise."

AOC has attracted criticism for undergoing freezing given that she has a partner. She and Riley Roberts met at college and have been engaged for four years. The idea that they're still not "ready" to have a baby has exasperated some, and I know that our deliberation over having a baby will make many of those older than us roll their eyes: just get on with it, just do it, there's never a right time and so on. I've heard all of those. It's likely she has too. But the fact is, egg freezing can offer women breathing space when it comes to a tricky decision. No guarantee, remember, but some breathing space.

If you knew you definitely wanted children, lucky you. If you've always known you don't, ditto. I've never known either way. AOC has never explicitly said she wants children, so we can only assume she has taken this decision to potentially give her some time. She could have a big few years ahead, and even in this more equal world, having a baby would, understandably and rightfully, affect her political career. In the meantime, being transparent about the process is a progressive and generous move. Although she may feel less keen to share immediately after the egg retrieval, when constipation can be a real bore. I've talked about that stage on my podcast too, if you fancy it.

***Freezing Time* by Sophia Money-Coutts is on all podcast platforms**

Hampstead ponds' after-dark secret

It's been the bathing spot of Kate Moss and Margaret Drabble, but at night the ladies' pool attracts a wildly different crowd

In this summer of heatwaves, with London's green spaces turned to scorched earth, the Hampstead Heath ponds exert the sort of pull that a Serengeti watering hole has on zebras. My parents diligently book slots to swim there and complain bitterly when the tickets run out. This bemuses me: people my age don't use the booking system — they go to the ponds for a free, nocturnal swim.

The first night I did this I was 17. A few friends and I loitered outside the Tesco Express on the edge of the heath. Someone I vaguely knew from school, whom I'll call Max, was loudly revving his car. "Yooo mate, get us a beer," he yelled. "Actually, never mind, I've got some. Are you going ponds?"

"Yeah, apparently you can get into the men's pond over a fence," I replied.

"Nah, nah, you don't want to go there, it's got blue green algae, it's like bare poisonous. Everyone is going to the women's pond."

For the women of north London, the Kenwood Ladies' Pond has been a sacred female-only space since 1925. Its patrons have included Esther Freud, Kate Moss, Margaret Drabble and now... us.

As I entered the pond, I felt a fundamental sense of doing something wrong. Music was blaring from across two well-manicured lawns lined by oak trees. The pond itself was packed. Boys and girls sat with legs in the water drinking beers and cocktail cans; others had managed to unmoor a small rowing boat and a group of girls were screaming as two boys took turns standing up and rocking it. The biggest attraction was what was happening on top of what I assumed to be the changing rooms: a large group were running and diving from the roof into the water below.

"Yo lads, up here," Max called out. "Use the bench."

Said bench had been flipped for use as a makeshift ladder. Dodging rusty screws and a drunk teen who thought it was funny to shake it, I scrambled up, and witnessed the whole hedonistic scene: the jumping, the drinking, the boating, all of it.

> **Boys and girls sat with legs in the water drinking beers and cocktail cans**

The roof was slick with a kind of black sealant. Peering over the edge, I saw the large, unyielding-looking pontoon below me. As I stood there, looking worried, a chant rose up behind me: "Jump, jump, jump!" Soon it spread to the people down below. "JUMP, JUMP, JUMP!" I jumped.

I saw a spinning mass of blurry shapes and colours, then plunged into cold darkness. Resurfacing, I spat out water, suspiciously tasting of blue-green algae. Then I heard shouts. Two scary-looking men in hi-vis were yelling. "Oi you! Stop swimming! We're here on behalf of the City of London police force and we wish to inform you that you are all trespassing."

Teens scuttled like disturbed woodlice. I dived towards my clothes and shoved on my trainers, forgetting that I'd stuffed my keys inside. As I hobbled towards the exit all I could think was, I should have booked online.

The writer has chosen to be anonymous

fashion

Dress, £110, nobodyschild.com

Street style in Paris

Street style in Copenhagen

Camisole, £85, meandem.com

Bra, no shirt: would you try the

The Scandis are wearing their undertoj — underwear — out on the street. The trend is here too, says Anna Murphy

Step aside, hygge. Step forward, undertoj. The newfangled religion of cosy that Denmark bestowed on the world a decade ago would appear to have been supplanted by, oddly, the precise opposite.

Introducing the creed of chilly. Because lingerie as outerwear was the modus operandi for many of the attendees at Copenhagen Fashion Week last week. If hygge's lodestar was the woolly jumper — remember those? — ideally knitted oneself on long nights by the fire, undertoj's might be the bra top, corset, slip dress or cami knickers.

Not that, in present temperatures, there is anything chilly about going out clad in the above and not much else. What's more, when it comes to straight male onlookers, a sighting may make them even hotter under the collar than they are already, if anyone is still wearing a collar at the moment, that is.

There have been lingerie-like flourishes in some women's wardrobes for years, of course — a bit of lace here, a sliver of midriff there — but things have gone to another level recently. Whether you consider that level to be higher or lower depends how Mary Whitehouse you skew.

A three-piece suit can these days refer to a blazer, trousers and bra. Shorts can look like frilly pants (the British variety), dresses like underslips, and the bustier has, in certain postcodes — 1255 in Copenhagen or E1 in London — become akin to the white tee in its ubiquity.

Kate Halfpenny from the British bridal brand Halfpenny London says that an increasing number of her brides are donning the corset bit of their wedding-day get-up — she specialises in bespoke modular styles — after the event. "Most wear their piece in the original bridal palette, but we are receiving more requests to transform them. We are currently working with a bride who wants hers dyed and hand-painted afterwards."

Shaped by the language of Genesis, clothes were for millennia akin to "sewed fig leaves", their raison d'être, alongside practicality, considered to be about modesty, at least in theory. Think of Jane Campion's *The Piano*, in which a glimpse of a tiny circle of flesh through a hole in the black stocking of Holly Hunter's Ada is transgressively erotic for Harvey Keitel's Baines.

The actress Monica Barbaro

Street style in Copenhagen

Though, of course, covering up didn't necessarily equate to modesty, the curve-exaggerating propensities of the corset being a case in point, not to mention, for men, the codpiece.

Modesty, the British fashion historian James Laver famously opined in 1969, is "the enemy... of swagger and seduction", the former quality usually attributed to a man, the latter to a woman. I think what we are seeing now is a newfangled combination of both. Lace, satin and general skimpiness are indubitably the very definition of seduction.

Yet today's out-and-about iterations are worn with swagger, often paired with other items that skew masculine, be that tailoring or sportswear, and always accessorised with an attitude that might be characterised not as come-hither but take-that, and I don't mean the boy band. These are ensembles that are female gaze-focused while pulling in plenty of the male gaze at the same time.

This is the funny contradiction that has been at the heart of this underwear-as-outerwear business since its first manifestations in the 1980s at the hands of Vivienne Westwood and Jean Paul Gaultier. Garments that were in origin partly about the objectification of women somehow

GETTY IMAGES

Skirt, £500, lagence.com

Street style in Copenhagen

lingerie look?

turned that on its head, while at the same time remaining what they always were. A win-win? Or a lose? You decide.

Those torpedo-bosomed corsets that Gaultier made for Madonna's *Blonde Ambition* tour in 1990 remain the ultimate exemplification of the paradox, taking what amounted to a female straitjacket and turning it into globe-bestriding armour. The designer later described Madonna as a "liberated woman who still played the game of femininity while being so strong she was almost macho". *Blonde Ambition.* The clue was in the name.

> **These are ensembles that are female gaze-focused**

Madonna worked famously hard for that steely body, to a degree that felt groundbreaking at the time, and that, indeed, broke ground when it came to a certain sort of woman henceforth endeavouring to acquire and maintain peak physicality along with keeping the other aspects of her show on the road. (The American cultural commentator Jia Tolentino has observed that "the ideal woman... is always optimising".)

To be scantily clad is to surface that grafted-for physique. Could that also be what is going on?

Blimp bodices are not back, praise the lord. But how best to embrace the rest of it? Nobody's Child gives a superior slip dress, the chocolate brown and black one pictured also available in a mid-green (£110, nobodyschild.com), as well as in (don't tell all those flesh-flashing Danes) a more restrained short-sleeved iteration (£40, reduced from £99).

A great way to conjure the mood while not getting arrested is via a slip skirt paired with a shirt or tee on top. L'Agence offers a candy pink style with a matching cami top if you are game (£500 and £315 respectively, lagence.com), as well as a more full-throttle world of lacy bra tops. Nobody's Child has that same green satin and lace in skirt form too (£65).

Me+Em's lace-trimmed cream jersey cami could work as a standalone for the brave, or peeping out under a shirt or blazer for the rest of us (£85, meandem.com). Reiss's cotton bustier top, with its school-of-Gaultier styling, in leopard print (£128 from £190, reiss.com) or a pale tropical floral (£128 from £180), is a more full-on take. But it's also chic. Even I might wear it, which is saying something, with modesty-protecting high-waisted trousers (it's a tad cropped). Grey ambition? Step aside, Madonna.

@annagmurphy

Martha Stewart has dyed her hair 'rose gold' pink at 85. I know why

I tried a bright hue and loved it. By Anna Murphy

What colour do you think of when (if?) you think of Martha Stewart? Is it Bedford Gray, a mid-grey she famously uses on her kitchen cabinets and which she used to flog as part of her now-defunct paint range? Or is it Araucana Blue, not just any old duck-egg blue but one precisely modelled on the, erm, output of her very own ducks? (Because Stewart, 85, is, of course, the kind of person to have her very own ducks.)

Or is it Martha Green? This shade was inspired by her collection of 1930s jadeite glassware, apparently, not by the 195,000 greenbacks she had to pay in penalties when settling civil insider trading allegations in 2006.

I'll wager it's not Stewart's new hair colour, which America's pre-eminent domestic goddess unveiled to her three million Instagram followers on Sunday. Pink! Or, as her hairstylist, Chris Appleton — the author, aptly enough, of a book called *Your Roots Don't Define You* — preferred to put it, "rose gold".

> **With pink hair the follow spot is permanently on you**

Come on, let's not pull our punches, Chris. Obviously this has to be known henceforth as Martha Pink. And no doubt, given Stewart's propensity for monetisation, it will be appearing in a beauty aisle near us shortly.

Martha Pink is less full-throttle than Barbie Pink, or its British equivalent, Shoreditch Pink, as I like to call it, after that area of London, where it's a dime a dozen. I gave Shoreditch Pink a try myself a few years ago, albeit in wig form, and to my surprise I loved it. But to live with it, as opposed to flirt with it for a day or two, would be another matter.

I don't mind attention, but I like to choose when I have it and when I don't. With pink hair the follow spot is permanently on you. And don't get me started on how — especially if, like me, you wear a lot of colour — it plays havoc with your wardrobe. But still. It definitely put a spring in my step.

Top: Anna Murphy. Above: Martha Stewart with her hairstylist Chris Appleton

Stewart's shtick for decades has been to live a life that looks to have come straight out of a Nancy Meyers film, living in preposterously beautiful houses and baking preposterously good cakes. People don't have pink hair in Nancy Meyers world. The film-maker's palette generally is — in marked contrast to the income levels she depicts — low-key.

Yet, to quote Meyers herself, something's gotta give. These days a woman of a certain age doesn't necessarily want to hide behind a white turtleneck — certainly not a woman like Stewart, who has built her brand (and her immense fortune, estimated to be about £300 million) on playing the attention economy like a violin.

Stewart has never been afraid of that aforementioned follow spot — has sought it out, in fact. You don't need to have clocked her appearance on the cover of Sports Illustrated's swimwear edition as a whippersnapper of 81 in 2023 to know she is the opposite of shy and retiring.

There's also the fact that what it means to grow older is changing almost year to year, aesthetically speaking. "When I am an old woman I shall wear purple," Jenny Joseph wrote in her famous poem *Warning* in 1961. (She was 28 at the time.) To wear purple is not enough to take on the shibboleths of ageism these days. You have to dye your hair pink. Or, in extreme cases, get yourself a whole new face. "For me, this is ageing gracefully," Kris Jenner, 70, said after the 2025 facelift that turned her into a peculiar version of her daughter Kim Kardashian. "It's my version."

Stewart claims not to have had plastic surgery, though in 2024, in conversation with her dermatologist Dr Dan Belkin on her podcast, she 'fessed up to Botox, fillers and, in Belkin's words, "a little bit of skin-tightening" using an ultrasound device. "I don't think a lot about age," she said, "but I don't want to look my age at all." She definitely doesn't.

fashion

My cheap fashion tips: from Zara's new sister shop to Uniqlo and Asda

Lefties is opening its first British store this month. The fashion editor Harriet Walker tries it on for style — and picks her other favourite bargain spots

Tailored barrel legs for £22.99, a Barbouresque barn jacket for £39.99, block-heeled sandals at £19.99. If you have a Zara habit, gird yourself: the Spanish chain's (even) cheaper little sister arrives on these shores at the end of the month.

Lefties is due to open in the Liverpool One centre on August 27, with branches in Lakeside, Essex, and Gateshead's Metrocentre to follow in autumn. That's why, in January, I jumped on an easyJet flight to Barcelona to find out what the high street's latest arrival had in store.

Short for "leftovers", the name may seem strange but the clothes are familiar: Lefties began life as a way of re-using fabrics lying around after the production runs of Inditex's bigger brands, such as Zara and Massimo Dutti. In Spain Lefties has become a fully fledged shopping destination, expanding into areas where the cost of living has hit hardest.

I saw people of all ages browsing its bright and roomy shops: shelves neatly stacked, rails full but not in an overcrowded bargain-basement way. Lefties stores stream with actual daylight where many of its dingier competitors do not: it makes a difference. As do automated checkouts and techy robots that sort stock. This adds up to a calmer, more upmarket vibe than you might expect.

Overall I was most impressed with the jackets and the jeans. The former, while undeniably synthetic, punched above their price tags — a €29.99 suede-look shacket that would last far beyond a single season — and the latter, which were 100 per cent cotton rather than reliant on stretch and reasonably sturdy, in modern cuts and an au courant shade of dark brown.

Spanish Gen Zers told me they bought their work clothes there, and I found anonymous tailoring that was smart and not too trend-faddy: a good, sharp-shouldered and long-line blazer for €29.99 and a pussybow blouse for €17.99. Teenagers came in for the €9.99 sweatshirts and €12.99 trackies, which seemed plainer and more plush than the Primark alternative (though there were plenty of Disney character T-shirts and tops with the names of American cities on them too).

It's debatable whether the world needs more cheap clothes, but there is certainly an audience for them right now, as the price of everything continues to rise. Here are my other best spots for well-priced buys that will stand the test of time too.

Harriet Walker in Lefties

Uniqlo

The reason you keep hearing people talk about this Japanese brand is because it has cornered the market in thoughtfully designed and well-made clothes that won't date or break the bank. Think cool and minimalist cult pieces created by the former Givenchy designer Clare Waight Keller, Dior's JW Anderson and the cognoscenti Parisian name Christophe Lemaire. While it's still hot, try its £34.90 sleeveless tiered dress with pockets and a drawstring waist to alter the silhouette, or the retro white-zipped cardigans that sold out almost instantly last year and have just arrived again for autumn (£39.90, uniqlo.com).

M&S

Its Foodhall may feel like a luxury right now, but the fashion floor is full of budget-friendly treats: leather ballet pumps with a modish square toe; a puff-sleeved knot-button top; and black ruched nylon sling bag have all just landed at £36 each (marksandspencer.com).

George at Asda

I started buying childrenswear here after I realised you got a lot of natural fibres for not a lot of money — and far fewer naff logos than elsewhere. Now it has extended that ethos to the womenswear too: see Erica Davies's latest capsule, which launches on August 17, for preppy £18 rugby tops and a great £42 utility jacket. My advice is to size up, wash low and wear to death: my £8 black slides easily pass for rubber Birkies and are still going strong four years on after numerous beach, park and coffee-shop trips.

CHRIS MCANDREW FOR THE TIMES

Lefties

Sandals, £19.99, lefties.com

Loafers, £20, tuclothing.sainsburys.co.uk

F+F at Tesco

Omnes

This sustainably minded brand uses deadstock and recycled fabrics only to create clothes that feel current but will last. I like its £59 capri jeans and £49 smocked scarlet top, and it does wedding guest dresses particularly well for sub-£100 (omnes.com).

F+F at Tesco

Head straight to what it calls "the F+F Edit", a capsule of sleek-looking and fashionably low-key pieces, which right now includes balloon trousers (£19.99) and an impressive reversible check/beige trench (£55, tesco.com). I bought a £45 green trench from here a few years back and it still looks great.

Tu at Sainsbury's

Another supermarket but they have all

Clockwise from main: jacket, £39.99, lefties.com; shacket, £28, tuclothing.sainsburys.co.uk; top, £18, direct.asda.com; top, £14.90, and trousers, £34.90, uniqlo.com; top, £6, and trousers, £19.50, tesco.com

upped their game as consumers tighten their belts. If your eye hasn't already wandered to its £28 checked preppy shacket during the Big Shop, perhaps you need to change where you do yours. The fashion pack (OK, me) are calling it Sains Laurent for its £20 crinkle-toed loafers (tuclothing.sainsburys.co.uk).

Nobody's Child

Its dresses are a little pricier, at £79, but I'm always impressed by the quality of the cuts at this British brand, which does more than most in this price bracket to monitor its environmental impact too (nobodyschild.com).

Decathlon

My recent conversion to camping has opened my eyes to the quality on offer at this French sports warehouse. Decent fleeces for £39.99, yoga pants for £17.99 and the must-have hiking shorts at £12.99, all minimally branded, well made and pleasingly can-do. And if you struggle with swimwear, Decathlon's is refreshingly uncomplicated (decathlon.com).

@_harrywalker1

Whatever the 'spectrum' expert says, my autism diagnosis saved me

By insisting many are being misdiagnosed with its characteristics, Uta Frith risks stigmatising people like me. By Florence Leslie

Your life is gleaming with possibility when you're 21 years old. But looking back a decade after my autism diagnosis, I feel sad about the wretched state that I was in.

Like many women on the spectrum, my autism was overlooked as a child, and I spent my life being called "quirky" instead. As I grew older I started masking my autistic traits to fit in, but I still felt lonely and found it hard to connect with others or cope with everyday demands without eventually having a meltdown.

Then one day I took to my bed. Once a top student with a genuine love for English literature, I skipped lectures until I stopped handing in coursework for my degree, extending deadline after deadline. My stomach was swollen with anxiety and once I started being sick, I couldn't stop for hours. The truth could no longer be suppressed, erupting from my skin in angry patches of psoriasis.

I found the will to live and returned for my final year of university, making an appointment at my student support office. I ticked a box asking if I struggled to read facial expressions; my mind cast back to the endless trouble I'd been in for saying the wrong thing at the wrong time. My diagnosis, the catalyst for transforming my life, was set in motion.

This week Professor Uta Frith, a leading autism expert who helped to conceptualise the theory that autism is a spectrum, was interviewed in The Times, saying that autism is being misdiagnosed. She also sparked debate over an essay in the journal Psychological Medicine that said autism "risks sliding into overdiagnosis".

I would argue that to invalidate someone's autism diagnosis, which includes rigorous questioning, creates even more stigma around a condition where people feel fundamentally misunderstood.

I do, however, agree with Frith's assertion that there should be a firmer differentiation between "somebody who can communicate as brilliantly" as the naturalist Chris Packham, who has an autism diagnosis, and autistic people with high support needs. In America the label of Asperger's was removed from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders in 2013 to streamline autism into one category and in Britain the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (Nice) has since updated its guidance too.

Florence Leslie

> **My assessor didn't wave a magic wand and fix my problems**

Like Frith, I believe subgroups would clarify what being autistic is like for me — having an intense passion for *Doctor Who* and panicking over last-minute changes of plan, yet living independently — versus someone who is non-speaking and requires lifelong care. Ironically, I feel that this would also create less division in the community among autistic people themselves and carers of autistic children with high-support needs, who both argue that they don't always feel listened to or have enough support.

Frith also questions how long the feeling of happiness after receiving an autism diagnosis really lasts. When I was eventually paired with a mentor at my university who was also on the spectrum, he said something that has stayed with me ever since: you find out something new about autism every day. It's true: ten years later, I'm still finding out what autism is like for others, or analysing why I've reacted to something in a particular way. Before I became a journalist I even worked for the National Autistic Society in the press and PR team, interviewing people about their experiences.

Frith also argues that people speaking about their autism diagnosis is "reminiscent of 19th-century accounts of religious conversions. You know, where people say... 'I've seen the light.'" While I felt alone grappling with my diagnosis a decade ago, today I need only turn to TikTok to find others recounting similar experiences; the hashtag "neurodivergent" has more than 2.1 million posts. I believe that this content encourages more people to consider whether they might be autistic too. Yes, it has led to record NHS waiting lists, but I think that less shame in society is positive, especially around a condition where people report feeling different. It also signposts to the government that more support is urgently needed.

While Frith says it's become fashionable to call autism a difference, I am happy to call it a disability, as I feel that it does make my life harder. My assessor didn't wave a magic wand and fix my problems. At 31, when I'm chatting with a group of people, I still feel as though I'm watching the interaction through a pane of glass. I still have epic meltdowns that culminate in uncontrollable crying that can go on for hours. But my diagnosis has helped me just as much.

I've learnt to anticipate what can cause meltdowns and notice when I'm starting to behave erratically — which for me can look like compulsive planning, as I grapple with the unexpected. It's given me the tools to communicate what I am struggling with and why, and to be less embarrassed about it, which allows others to help me. I've tried to stop putting myself in environments that I find intensely difficult, like noisy pubs, even if other people find them bearable. It's given me the confidence to rebuild my life and live it on my own terms, rather than feeling like a failure.

Most importantly, my autism diagnosis has allowed me to accept myself.

arts

‘It’s too soon to make fun of Andy Burnham, give him a chance’

From Nigel Farage to Peeves the poltergeist, Peter Serafinowicz likes to keep it varied, he tells Ben Dowell

JAY L CLENDENIN/LOS ANGELES TIMES/CONTOUR BY GETTY IMAGES

Serafinowicz doing his “very short notice” Nigel Farage impersonation on SNL UK

Peter Serafinowicz has been such a fixture on our screens it would be easy to assume that his life has been unerringly carefree. The 54-year-old’s CV includes his turn as the plummy presenter in *Look Around You*, the superb BBC satire of *Tomorrow’s World*; the vicious Darth Maul in the *Phantom Menace* Star Wars film; appearances in *I’m Alan Partridge*, *South Park*, *Little Britain* and *Parks and Recreation*; and many pitch-perfect celebrity impressions (his Terry Wogan was so good that the Irishman invited him onto one of his final Radio 2 morning shows in 2009).

More recently he was in *Amandaland* playing Johannes Van der Velde, the hideously vain South African boyfriend of Lucy Punch’s titular character. Their relationship lit up the first series of the BBC comedy, which was co-created by his sister, Helen.

“It was particularly enjoyable because my sister wrote a lot of the Johannes episodes in *Amandaland*,” he tells me from his home in Swiss Cottage, north London. “So she was on set with me. To be performing something with my sister for the first time, I was so proud.”

His early life certainly sounds contented. Born in suburban Liverpool in 1972 to a scaffolder dad and post office worker mother, he had, he says, a happy family full of laughs. He remembers a shared love of comedy with family viewings of *Monty Python* and Alexei Sayle. All three siblings have gone into showbusiness: his brother James is a writer and producer.

His CV is so wide-ranging that even reading it feels exhausting. He jokes that when he gets recognised in the street he has no idea what it may be for (“I’ve got a little wheel of fortune in my head with ‘what are they going to recognise me for?’ And it’s always surprising”). His talents are about to be stretched further in Howard Overman’s sharp new heist thriller *Hit Point*, in which he plays a disgruntled ex-police officer.

Fourteen years ago, when he was 40, he received an ADHD diagnosis which made sense of many inner struggles but may also partly explain that formidable work rate. “F***ing hell, I’ve had this my whole life. I didn’t realise it,” he remembers thinking when it came.

Peter Serafinowicz. Below: with Lucy Punch in Amandaland

Hit Point begins on U&Dave, U&Drama and U&W tomorrow at 9pm

So did his ADHD help or hinder his creativity over the years? Medication has certainly aided him, he says. “It gave me the energy and a bit of perspective. Before, I had this propensity to kind of feel like I was drowning in treacle. On medication it felt like I could come up quite a bit.”

Last year he split from the actress Sarah Alexander, his wife of 23 years (they have two teenage children). He doesn’t want to talk about it and he has also managed to avoid being drawn too much into the controversy surrounding his former brother-in-law, Graham Linehan, the *Father Ted* writer turned activist in the debate over trans issues, and ex-husband of Helen. Are they still in touch? “No, I haven’t seen him for years,” he says.

He is happier to talk about taking on the role of Peeves the poltergeist in the mammoth new *Harry Potter* TV series for HBO. Peeves, a mischievous spirit of chaos that haunts Hogwarts, was played by Rik Mayall in the movies but, to the dismay of fans, was removed entirely in the final cut.

“I don’t really know if I could describe what I did. I just interpreted the script as best I could and I have to say the scripts were some of the funniest things I’ve ever read and performed. It was really such a joy and a pleasure to do this so I just hope that translates into the performance and that people dig it, you know.”

He is also planning a new stage show next year in which he will exercise his astonishing gift for impersonation and do a rare thing for creative types — embrace the benefits of AI. It has evolved from his 2023 Soho Theatre show, *The Elvis 2023 Comeback Special*, in which he appeared as Elvis with AI projecting the King’s face onto his as he performed non-Elvis songs such as AC/DC’s *Back in Black* and Iggy Pop’s *Lust for Life* (Serafinowicz loves Elvis but finds his song choices “a little bit boring”). The new run will feature many more impersonations, including Kevin Spacey and Al Pacino.

Whether his “Sassy Trump” will appear is not clear. In 2016 his sketches redubbing the president in camp style went viral. It was driven by Serafinowicz’s anger that Trump was being treated like a “normal politician from the Seventies, Eighties or Nineties” rather than as someone who is not really like that at all.

“I don’t know if satire ever really does anything, there’s a danger of it softening Trump’s image. Alec Baldwin doing Trump on *Saturday Night Live* was the only anti-Trump comedy coming out of the States [at the time] and I found it quite depressing... Trump has rewritten the rules of satire. For thousands of years we’ve lampooned those in power by identifying their quirks, their flaws, and exaggerating these traits to absurd extremes.

“He presented himself as an alpha male and he’s the pettiest, prissiest, bitchiest, campest guy. By giving him this crude kind of 1970s Liberace voice but saying exactly what he said, it... made you listen to what he was actually saying, which is another weapon of his. You’re so fatigued by hearing this voice again and again.”

This year he was asked “at very short notice” to do a Nigel Farage impersonation for *Saturday Night Live UK*, Sky’s successful British iteration of the American sketch show. His skits included one where he sat behind a desk at 10 Downing Street that had been fitted with a pub beer pump while being served a morning Yorkie bar by his deputy, Kemi Badenoch (played by Ayoade Bamgboye).

“I had a fantastic experience on that show... If I do it again [I hope]... he’s got his friends around and it embarrasses him.” He hasn’t yet been asked to reprise the Reform leader for the second series and part of him rather hopes, he says, that “he becomes so irrelevant that I won’t need to”. Given his Liverpool accent, I suggest there’s a chance he may also be called on to do Andy Burnham.

“It’s too early to figure out what’s his thing that we can latch on to and make fun of,” he says of the new prime minister. “For a politician he seems straightforward and normal and kind of cool. You want to give someone a chance, you don’t want to lay into them straight away.”

TIMPONE/BFA.COM/SHUTTERSTOCK

Phoebe Bridgers and Paul Mescal in 2022. Above: Gracie Abrams and Mescal in February

Phoebe v Gracie: why revenge songs still rule pop

Phoebe Bridgers takes aim at Gracie Abrams, fellow pop star and girlfriend of her ex Paul Mescal, on her latest album. It's nothing new, says Blanca Schofield

Never date a singer-songwriter. Nor a singer-songwriter's ex. Well, obviously do what you want — but only if you are fine with getting caught up in a deluge of online conversation when the singer-songwriter releases a song with lyrics that are most likely about you.

This is where Gracie Abrams finds herself. The 26-year-old musician behind hits with billions of streams such as *That's So True* — and daughter of the *Star Trek* and *Star Wars* director JJ Abrams — is dating the Irish actor Paul Mescal, 30. Mescal used to be engaged to another musician, Phoebe Bridgers, 31. And Bridgers is due to release her first solo album in six years on Friday. *Lost Weekend* has had five-star reviews from critics who had early access to it, including The Times's Will Hodgkinson. It has also sparked an online debate around this line on the track *The Governor's Waltz*: "And she can pretend to be me/ Since she took my place in my bed on that stage/ I have not lost any sleep."

This is not a line couched in metaphors. There is little doubt as to whom this is about. Abrams has cited Bridgers as an inspiration. Both women have performed in a bed (Bridgers on James Corden's show in 2020; Abrams on stage during her 2024-25 tour) and presumably shared a bed with Mescal. No detective work required. But why do fans (and some non-fans) care so much?

For most of us, other people's love lives are interesting. Gossiping is important — it's a human evolutionary tool that builds community. But there's a modern hysteria to this fascination. We live in a time when social media makes us believe we have an insight into celebrities' lives — we have a parasocial relationship with them. But they're more closed off, and their presence more curated, than ever.

A-listers such as Bridgers and Abrams don't give many interviews. If they do, they will often be giddy video snippets or sanitised profiles in glossy magazines. The 2022 Beyoncé cover interview in Vogue had two direct quotes from her. No wonder fans agonise over the identity of "Becky" in "he only want me when I'm not there/ He better call Becky with the good hair", a lyric from her 2016 song *Sorry*, allegedly about her husband Jay-Z's infidelity. They take what they can get. Likewise with the followers of Bridgers and Abrams.

Of course, the master of alluding to others in her music is the most popular woman in pop, Taylor Swift. Sometimes her references are obscure "Easter eggs" — hidden clues that Swifties love to toil to decipher ("You keep my old scarf from that very first week" in *All Too Well*, about her ex-boyfriend the actor Jake Gyllenhaal) — while others are anything but. She released the song *Style* after she dated Harry Styles. Bridgers and Abrams have worked with Swift, and there is a through-line in the three musicians' confessional writing about heartbreak.

Swift's last longform interview was with Time magazine when it named her person of the year in 2023, if you don't count her appearance on her then boyfriend, now husband Travis Kelce's podcast last year. Like Beyoncé she rigidly controls what she is heard to say publicly. That way there is less room for error in this age of quick judgment.

In music there is more freedom. After all, can someone really be cancelled for a lyric? Swift put this to the test in 2025 with a song on *The Life of a Showgirl* titled *Actually Romantic*, a diss track about a woman who is obsessed with her, whom she describes as "a toy chihuahua/ barking at me from a tiny purse". Many saw this as an attack on Charli XCX, who has a song called *Everything Is Romantic* and appeared to sing about her tendency to compare herself to Swift on *Sympathy Is a Knife*. "Don't wanna see her backstage at my boyfriend's show/ Fingers crossed behind my back, I hope they break up quick/ 'cause I couldn't even be her if I tried" is thought to be a reference to Swift's relationship with Matty Healy, the lead singer of the 1975, whose drummer, George Daniel, is married to Charli XCX.

Taylor Swift and Charli XCX

Swift's rebuttal didn't go down well. She was accused of "punching down": attacking someone less commercially successful than her who had shown vulnerability by articulating her insecurities. Swifties went on social media to express their disappointment. It didn't stop *The Life of a Showgirl* topping the charts. A cynic might say that part of the reason Bridgers, Swift and co put these lines in is to court drama and drive up their streams.

It certainly worked for Shakira in

> **'She can pretend to be me since she took my place in my bed,' she sings**

2023 with *Bzrp Music Sessions, Vol 53*, a diss track about her ex-husband Gerard Piqué and the 23-year-old woman he allegedly cheated on her with. The Colombian star did the opposite of holding back, singing, "You traded a Ferrari for a Twingo/ You traded a Rolex for a Casio." It has been streamed more than a billion times and topped the Billboard chart. Another example of punching down? Arguably Piqué's girlfriend should not have been a target, but surely when you have an affair with Shakira's husband the risk is that she may write about you.

After all, these women are only the latest in a long line of musicians writing about lost loves and those who have wronged them, from *You're So Vain* — Carly Simon's excellent dismemberment of Warren Beatty and others in song — to the present day. One of Mariah Carey's most infectious hits, *Obsessed*, is believed to be about Eminem's insistence they were in a relationship — a claim she refuted, singing, "You're delusional, boy you're losing your mind." Then, proving that it's not just women who do this, Eminem released a vicious response in the shape of *The Warning*, in which he doubled down on his claims. The producer Timbaland confirmed that Justin Timberlake's *Cry Me a River* came after he had a fight with Britney Spears in 2002. Twenty-eight years earlier George Harrison wrote *So Sad* when his marriage to Pattie Boyd was collapsing amid rumours she was having an affair with Eric Clapton.

Ultimately, where there is love there is pain. Where there is pain there is art. And where there is art there is someone online amassing an army of gossips to figure out who it is you are singing about.

times2

Your weekday brain boost

More puzzles Pages 14-16

Every day, Monday to Thursday, a page of extra puzzles to give your brain an extended workout

Samurai difficult

Fill each grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Where the puzzles overlap, the rows and columns do not go beyond their usual length.

6					5			8					1				9	3	2	4
	1	8			4								5		4					
5				1	8	3						4		3			1	7		5
		1	5	2			7							5	3		2			7
	6	5				1	8							2		4		5		
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Sudoku easy

						2		
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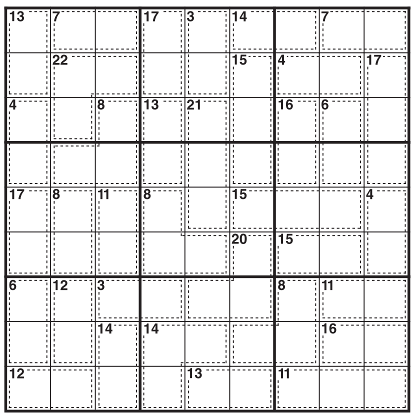
		8	1			9		
	5	9	7			8		

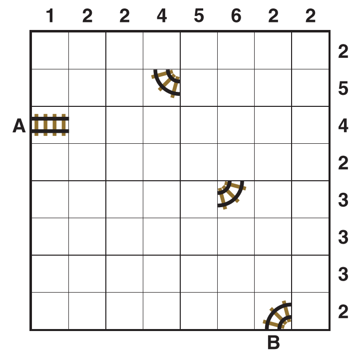
Killer gentle

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Each set of cells joined by dotted lines must add up to the target number in its top-left corner. Within each set of cells joined by dotted lines, a digit cannot be repeated.



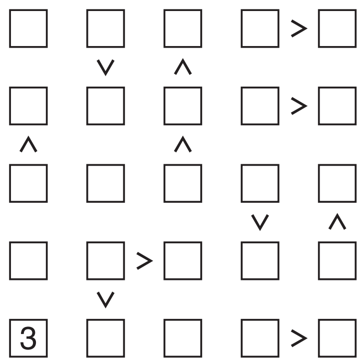
Train Tracks

Lay tracks to enable the train to travel from village A to village B. The numbers indicate how many sections of track go in each row and column. There are only straight sections and curved sections. The track cannot cross itself.

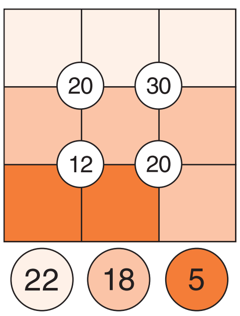


Futoshiki

Fill the blank squares so that every row and column contains each of the numbers 1 to 5 once only. The symbols between the squares indicate whether a number is larger (>) or smaller (<) than the number next to it.



Sakuro



Place the numbers 1 to 9 in the spaces so that the number in each circle is equal to the sum of the four surrounding spaces, and each colour total is correct

Play Mini Sudoku every day Monday-Sunday online at thetimes.com and on Live app

Codeword

Every letter in the crossword-style grid, right, is represented by a number from 1 to 26. Each letter of the alphabet appears in the grid at least once. Use the letters already provided to work out the identity of further letters. Enter letters in the main grid and the smaller reference grid until all 26 letters of the alphabet have been accounted for. Proper nouns are excluded.

■	4	6	16	18	11	26	2	■	15	7	2	4
4	■	4	■	■	■	18 R	■	6	■	11	■	3
26	18	24	6	9	24	2	■	7	4	8	16	2
2	■	8	■	24	■	2	■	4	■	16	■	19
17	11	4	18	4	■	20	2	8	11	17 T	21	■
17	■	■	■	18	■	2	■	22	■	24	■	6
2	8	22	24	18	2	■	26	2	22	6	11	17
22	■	11	■	2	■	4	■	18	■	■	■	4
■	4	6	5	7	24	14	■	10	13	11	8	1
17	■	4	■	7	■	24	■	24	■	16	■	11
18	2	25	24	2	■	6	2 E	6	6	11	10	8
2	■	10	■	22	■	2	■	■	■	8	■	1
12	11	13	11	■	4	22	23	24	22	1	2	■

A B C D ~~E~~ F G H I J K L M N O P Q ~~R~~ S ~~T~~ U V W X Y Z

1	2 E	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17 T	18 R	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

Mini Sudoku

Fill in the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x2 box contains the digits 1 to 6

5		2			1
1				2	
				4	6
4	2				
	4				2
2			1		4

Solutions in tomorrow's Times2

Yesterday's solutions

SAMURAI

5	9	3	2	1	4	6	8	7				3	6	1	5	9	8	7	2	4
6	7	1	9	8	5	4	2	3				4	7	2	6	1	3	5	8	9
4	8	2	7	3	6	5	1	9				9	5	8	4	7	2	1	6	3
3	1	9	5	6	2	7	4	8				6	3	4	2	8	5	9	1	7
8	2	5	4	7	1	3	9	6				5	8	9	1	6	7	4	3	2
7	4	6	3	9	8	2	5	1				2	1	7	3	4	9	8	5	6
2	3	7	1	5	9	8	6	4	9	5	1	7	2	3	8	5	4	6	9	1
9	6	4	8	2	7	1	3	5	2	4	7	8	9	6	7	2	1	3	4	5
1	5	8	6	4	3	9	7	2	3	8	6	1	4	5	9	3	6	2	7	8
						2	4	6	5	1	8	9	3	7						
						3	5	8	7	2	9	6	1	4						
						7	9	1	4	6	3	2	5	8						
5	8	9	2	6	3	4	1	7	8	3	2	5	6	9	8	3	4	1	2	7
2	4	1	9	7	5	6	8	3	1	9	5	4	7	2	1	9	5	8	3	6
7	6	3	4	8	1	5	2	9	6	7	4	3	8	1	7	6	2	9	5	4
4	7	2	1	3	6	8	9	5				6	2	7	9	4	3	5	1	8
9	3	6	8	5	4	1	7	2				8	5	3	6	7	1	4	9	2
1	5	8	7	9	2	3	6	4				1	9	4	5	2	8	6	7	3
6	9	4	3	1	7	2	5	8				2	1	6	4	5	7	3	8	9
3	1	7	5	2	8	9	4	6				9	3	8	2	1	6	7	4	5
8	2	5	6	4	9	7	3	1				7	4	5	3	8	9	2	6	1

SAKURO

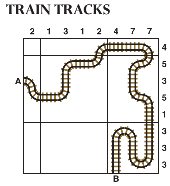
6	2	3
8	4	1
9	7	5

Circles: 20, 10, 28, 17

MINI SUDOKU

6	4	5	1	3	2
2	1	3	6	4	5
4	5	2	3	1	6
3	6	1	5	2	4
5	3	4	2	6	1
1	2	6	4	5	3

TRAIN TRACKS



FUTOSHIKI

3 1 4 < 5 2

5 3 > 2 4 > 1

1 5 3 2 4

^ v v

2 4 1 3 5

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4 2 5 1 < 3

SUDOKU

7	3	2	8	4	1	6	9	5
1	4	5	3	9	6	8	7	2
9	6	8	7	2	5	4	3	1
2	1	9	6	5	4	3	8	7
8	7	6	1	3	9	2	5	4
4	5	3	2	8	7	9	1	6
3	2	4	5	1	8	7	6	9
5	8	7	9	6	2	1	4	3
6	9	1	4	7	3	5	2	8

KILLER

9	5	7	3	2	1	8	4	6
4	3	6	8	7	5	1	2	9
8	1	2	4	9	6	3	7	5
3	2	5	7	1	8	6	9	4
1	6	4	9	5	3	7	8	2
7	9	8	2	6	4	5	1	3
5	4	3	1	8	2	9	6	7
2	7	1	6	3	9	4	5	8
6	8	9	5	4	7	2	3	1

CODEWORD

■	Q	U	O	R	U	M	■	P	I	P	E	■
Q	■	D	■	A	■	E	■	E	■	A	■	■
U	N	D	E	R	W	E	A	R	■	C	U	P
I	■	E	■	E	■	K	■	J	■	K	■	S
Z	E	R	O	■	B	E	A	U	T	I	F	Y
M	■	■	■	D	■	R	■	R	■	N	■	C
A	C	T	I	O	N	■	L	E	N	G	T	H
S	■	H	■	W	■	C	■	R	■	■	■	O
T	R	I	A	N	G	L	E	■	I	D	O	L
E	■	E	■	B	■	I	■	B	■	A	■	O
R	E	V	■	E	X	C	L	U	D	I	N	G
■	■	E	■	A	■	H	■	L	■	S	■	Y
■	E	D	I	T	■	E	M	B	R	Y	O	■

Reacher returns for round four of baddie-bashing

Ben Dowell
TV review

Reacher
Prime Video
★★★★☆

'A hundred thousand years ago there were people who stayed by the campfire and people who wandered. I'm pretty sure I'm the direct descendant of the wandering type. It's just who I am."

So begin the latest adventures of Jack Reacher, an adaptation of Lee Child's book *Gone Tomorrow* and the fourth Prime Video series of Alan Ritchson's courageous attempts to squeeze his bulging biceps into the tightest of T-shirts. He certainly looks more the part than 5ft 7in Tom Cruise in the movies, and he does an even better line in meaningful stares.

We all have our guilty pleasures and this is mine. Yes, I am a Reacherholic, a lost soul drawn irresistibly to the stories of goodies, baddies and lots of biffing. Maybe it's the heat, but this feels like the kind of unchallenging drama these sweltering times demand.

As we have come to expect, blues-lovin' Reacher may be a wanderer, but he's no loner. In fact, he acquires allies as quickly as he collects villainous faces to punch. And it's all thanks to a surprisingly complex plot (at least compared with the violence and spare, staccato dialogue) in which he witnesses a woman shoot herself in the head on a subway train before uncovering a web of secrets, including flash drives, dodgy politicians and a woman who needs a bone marrow transplant for her leukaemia.

Silly? Why, of course. It's niftily scripted by the showrunner Nick Santora, who serves us silliness with a spade, a world with the ethical complexity of a superhero strip cartoon and something of its dramatic architecture. When Reacher faces a group of ne'er-do-wells stumbling out of a van with blacked-out windows you can see the kapows coming a mile off.

Our man often adapts his "Reacher says nothing" position, which has become a running joke in the books, but there is some decent wordplay here. "Sherlock no Holmes," one dumb-seeming cop calls him when he says he is homeless.

His compadres are the subway suicide woman's cop brother and the leukaemia woman, Lila (Agnez Mo). It feels oddly reminiscent of Peter Davison-era *Doctor Who*, when the Time Lord suddenly found himself hurtling through time and space with a whole classroom of companions. As with the Doctor, you sort of want him to be alone, but you know poor Jack needs the company, and it's always good to have witnesses to his smarts and his niftiness with the fists.

After the first episode you suspect the longing looks he gets from Lila mean that they will soon be, er, reaching for each other in a romantic sense. But there probably isn't time, and you know there are plenty more twists ahead. There's also a neat turn from Sydelle Noel as the sharp detective Tamara Green.

Not that I have a crush on him. Oh no. But Jack R *is* the one you want by your side, the person you yearned for in the school playground when things got tasty and fists were flying. He's like a superhero without the supernatural powers but with all the moral strength. Hell, he's even nice to kittens and the homeless. It's not complex. It's not Proust. But boy it is fun.

Alan Ritchson in the title role of the Lee Child adaptation

Radio choice

The Greenham Effect
Radio 4 Extra, 10am

In *The Greenham Effect*, Rebecca Mordan looks at the women's peace camp established in 1981 at the RAF base in Berkshire that was the home of US cruise missiles. Mordan was there as a child, and is part of a team who collected an oral history of women who took part in the protest. She speaks to Ann Pettitt and Karmen Thomas, the originators of the idea of a march on Greenham that led to the protest by hundreds of women. Mordan examines how the experience changed their lives, and how the Greenham protest provided a blueprint for groups such as Extinction Rebellion. ***Clair Woodward***

Times Radio

Digital, web, smart speaker, app

5.00am Tom Nunan with Early Breakfast **6.00** Salma El-Wardany and Stig Abell with Times Radio Breakfast **10.00** Hugo Rifkind **1.00pm** The Times at One: with Stephen Sackur **2.00** Fi Glover and Roya Nikkhah **4.00** Calum Macdonald with Times Radio Drive **7.00** The Evening Edition with Albie Amankona **10.00** Cindy Yu **1.00am** The Best of Times Radio

Radio 2

FM: 88-90.2 MHz

6.30am The Sara Cox Breakfast Show **9.30** Vernon Kay **12.00** Jeremy Vine **2.00pm** DJ Spoony **4.00** Joel Dommett **7.00** Edith Bowman **9.00** The Folk Show with Mark Radcliffe **10.00** The Good Groove with Melvin Odoom **12.00** OJ Borg **3.00am** Alternative Sounds of the 90s with Dermot O'Leary (r) **4.00** Owain Wyn Evans

Radio 3

FM: 90.2-92.4 MHz

6.30am Breakfast
9.30 Essential Classics
1.00pm Classical Live
Elizabeth Alker showcases performances from the UK and beyond, including Stravinsky from the BBC Proms, Medtner from Verbier and Chopin from Granada. Shostakovich (Festive Overture); Medtner (Piano Quintet in C); Chopin (Two Nocturnes, Op 62); Stravinsky (Symphony in Three Movements); Beethoven (Piano Concerto No 4 in G, Op 58)
3.00 Choral Evensong
From Chichester Cathedral during the Southern Cathedrals Festival, featuring music by Ashfield, Rubbra and Howells
4.00 Composer of the Week: Montgeroult (1764-1836)
Donald Macleod and pianist Clare Hammond discuss how Hélène de Montgeroult used her musical talents to save her own life (r)
5.00 In Tune
Music from Kleio Quartet
7.00 Live BBC Proms 2026
The Los Angeles Philharmonic and conductor Gustavo Dudamel perform Beethoven's Seventh Symphony and Gabriela Ortiz's *Revolución diamantina*. From the Royal Albert Hall, London. Beethoven (Symphony No 7 in A)
7.35 Interval **7.55** Gabriela Ortiz (*Revolución diamantina* — UK premiere)
10.00 Night Tracks
11.30 'Round Midnight
New Sounds from Wonky Logic
12.30am Through the Night

Radio 4

FM: 92.4-94.6 MHz

5.00am News Summary
5.04 BBC Inside Science (r)
5.34 Shipping Forecast
5.43 Prayer for the Day
5.45 Farming Today
6.00 Today
9.00 Sideways
Matthew Syed explores the ideas that shape individuals' lives (5/8)
9.30 Breakin' the Cycle
Colin and D decide to shut down their drug empire (3/6)
10.00 Woman's Hour
11.00 After EncroChat
Danny Shaw investigates whether the EncroChat operation reduced the supply of drugs (r)
11.40 This Week in History
11.45 Book of the Week: Hiroshima, 8.15: The Lost Memoir
Written by Kiyoshi Tanimoto and Koko Kondo (3/5)
12.04pm You and Yours
1.00 The World at One
1.45 Human Intelligence
The work of the French philosopher Michel de Montaigne
2.00 The Archers (r)
2.15 Drama: United Kingdoms (4/5) (r)
3.00 James Hutton and the Restless Earth
Karine Polwart contemplates deep geological time (r)
3.30 TBA
4.00 The Power of Guilt (4/5) (r)
4.15 The Media Show
5.00 PM
6.00 Six O'Clock News
6.30 Best Medicine
Horse therapy and finding a diagnosis on Instagram (3/6)
7.00 The Archers
Lily makes a friend
7.15 Front Row
8.00 AntiSocial (r)
8.45 Café Hope
A group for LGBTQ+ people to enjoy nature (7/7) (r)
9.00 Invisible Hands
The story of the CIA (3/6) (r)
9.30 Inside Health (6/6) (r)
10.00 The World Tonight
10.45 Book at Bedtime: The Vicar of Wakefield
By Oliver Goldsmith (8/10)
11.00 Sunil Patel: An Idiot's Guide to Living Forever
Having failed to become immortal, Sunil ponders where to go from here. Last in the series
11.15 Follow the Rabbit
Chris goes in search of extraterrestrial life (3/5) (r)
11.30 A Good Read (4/9) (r)
12.00 News and Weather
12.30am Book of the Week: Hiroshima, 8.15: The Lost Memoir
By Kiyoshi Tanimoto and Koko Kondo (r)
12.48 Shipping Forecast
1.00 As BBC World Service

Radio 4 Extra

Digital only

8.00am Bridget Christie: Mortal **8.30** Adrian Mole: The Cappuccino Years **8.45** Small Island **9.00** Best Medicine **9.30** Following the Martian Invasion **9.45** Daily Service **10.00** Choice The Greenham Effect **11.00** The Wolf Far Hence **11.30** The Senior Partner **12.00** After Henry **12.30pm** Hancock's Half Hour **1.00** Bridget Christie: Mortal **1.30** Adrian Mole: The Cappuccino Years **1.45** Small Island **2.00** The Ultimate Choice **2.30** Getting Nowhere Fast **3.00** Renaissance Man: The Last Judgment of Giorgio Vasari **4.00** The Greenham Effect **5.00** The Wolf Far Hence **5.30** The Senior Partner **6.00** After Henry **6.30** Hancock's Half Hour **7.00** Bridget Christie: Mortal **7.30** Adrian Mole: The Cappuccino Years **7.45** Small Island **8.00** The Ultimate Choice **8.30** Getting Nowhere Fast **9.00** Renaissance Man: The Last Judgment of Giorgio Vasari **10.00** Comedy Club: Best Medicine **10.30** Mitch Benn's Crimes Against Music **11.00** Welcome to Wherever You Are **11.30** Dial M for Pizza

Radio 5 Live

MW: 693, 909

5.00am Wake Up to Money **6.00** Breakfast **9.00** Nicky Campbell **11.00** Samantha Simmonds **2.00pm** Matt Chorley **4.00** 5 Live Drive **7.00** 5 Live Sport **8.00** 5 Live Sport: Paris Saint-Germain v Aston Villa (Kick-off **8.00**) **10.30** Johnny l'Anson **1.00am** Dotun Adebayo

talkSPORT

MW: 1053, 1089 kHz

5.00am Early Sports Breakfast **6.00** Breakfast with Alan Brazil **10.00** Shebahn Aherne **1.00pm** Max Rushden & Charlie Baker **4.00** Drive **7.00** Kick Off: Paris Saint-Germain v Aston Villa (Kick-off **8.00**). Commentary on the UEFA Super Cup **10.00** The Sports Bar **1.00am** Extra Time with Paul Ross

Talk

Digital only

6.00am Ian Collins **10.00** Julia Hartley Brewer **1.00pm** David Bull **4.00** Kevin O'Sullivan **7.00** Peter Cardwell **10.00** Petrie Hosken **1.00am** Paul Ross

6 Music

Digital only

5.00am Chris Hawkins **7.00** Nick Grimshaw **10.00** Lauren Laverne **1.00pm** Craig Charles **4.00** Huw Stephens **7.00** New Music Fix Daily **9.00** Riley & Coe **11.00** 6 Music Artist in Residence: Wolf Alice **12.00** Freak Zone Playlist **1.00am** Tighten Up: The Story of Trojan Records **2.00** Tighten Up: The Story of Trojan Records **3.00** Live Hour **4.00** Jukebox

Virgin Radio

Digital only

6.30am The Chris Evans Breakfast Show **10.00** Emma B **2.00pm** Ben Jones **6.00** Geoff Lloyd **10.00** Goldierocks **2.00am** Steve Denyer

Classic FM

FM: 100-102 MHz

6.30am Tim Lihoreau **9.00** The Hall of Fame Hour **10.00** Aled Jones **1.00pm** Anne-Marie Minhall **4.00** Margherita Taylor **7.00** Relaxing Evenings with John Brunning **9.00** Composer Carousel **10.00** Calm Classics **1.00am** Bill Overton **4.00** Early Breakfast

television

PICKS OF THE DAY

Spy Next Door: The Anna Chapman Story
Channel 4, 9pm

It seems unbearably quaint now, but in the early 2000s people started to believe that the Cold War was over. Yet intelligence professionals remained alert to the spy networks. This two-part documentary tells the story of Anna Chapman, a Russian spy who — via a marriage with a British man — embedded herself in the world of UK high finance before a 2009 move to Manhattan. FBI agents describe how they tracked her through New York's coffee shops and department stores, while other contributors include Roderic Lyne, the former British ambassador to Russia, and Marina Litvinenko, the widow of the poisoned dissident Alexander Litvinenko. The geopolitical threads tug powerfully on the current global moment; yet descriptions of Chapman as "seductive" or "a stunner" seem like true relics of another age. **Victoria Segal**

Anna Chapman (Channel 4, 9pm)

Murder Trial
BBC2, 9pm

In February 2024 Brian Low, a former country estate groundsman, was shot dead while walking his dog in rural Perthshire. The chief suspect was Low's neighbour and former gamekeeper David Campbell, who worked on the same estate as Low. This edition of *Murder Trial* returns to the Scottish High Court to follow Campbell's trial where missed forensic opportunities mean the prosecution case rests on circumstantial evidence. A section of Campbell's home CCTV was deleted on the night in question and his doorbell camera was covered with tape on the morning of the crime. There is also CCTV from the area revealing a figure on an ebike carrying a shotgun-shaped bag on the route from Campbell's house to the crime scene. Will the jury be convinced the man on the ebike was Campbell? **Joe Clay**

BBC1

6.00am Breakfast
9.30 Animal Park (r) (AD)
10.00 Trace, Track, Get My Car Back (r)
10.30 Live European Athletics Championships: Birmingham 2026. Jeanette Kwakye presents coverage of the opening session on day three from Alexander Stadium, including the first three disciplines of the decathlon
1.15pm BBC News at One; Weather
1.40 BBC Regional News; Weather
1.50 BBC News at One; Weather
2.00 Money for Nothing. JJ Chalmers rescues a record collection
2.45 Escape to the Country. Margherita Taylor helps a retired Army couple to find a new home in Norfolk (r) (AD)
3.30 The Repair Shop. The experts restore a pair of boots and a printing press (r) (AD)
4.30 The Answer Run. Quiz show
5.15 Pointless. Quiz show (r)
6.00 BBC News at Six; Weather
6.30 BBC Regional News; Weather

7.00 The One Show The 20th birthday celebrations continue

7.30 EastEnders Chelsea's family rally together in her time of need, and Eve a truth comes to light about Joel's incident (AD)

8.00 Live European Athletics Championships: Birmingham 2026 Further coverage of the evening session on day three from Alexander Stadium. There is expected to be British involvement in the men's 400m final this evening, with 2024 silver medallist Charlie Dobson and 2018 and 2022 champion Matthew Hudson-Smith in the squad. The successor to Femke Broeders-Bol is also crowned in the women's 400m hurdles, the women's hammer final reaches a conclusion, and the evening draws to a close with the men's 110m hurdles final

10.00 BBC News at Ten

10.30 BBC Regional News and Weather
10.40 MOTD: Uefa Super Cup Highlights Paris Saint-Germain v Aston Villa

11.10 FILM: Red Eye (12, 2005) A hotelier on a flight to Miami realises a passenger she has befriended is intent on involving her in a political assassination. Thriller with Rachel McAdams and Cillian Murphy (AD)

12.25am The Hit List Celebrity Special Presenter Chris Hughes and *Coronation Street* star Jack P Shepherd, comedians Sara Pascoe and Rhys James, and actors Gary Lamont and Renee Bailey compete in the quickfire music quiz (r) **1.15-6.00** BBC News

BBC2

6.15am Homes Under the Hammer (r)
7.15 Money for Nothing (r)
8.00 Sign Zone: Great Japanese Railway Journeys (r) (AD, SL)
8.30 Great Continental Railway Journeys. Sardinia and Corsica (r) (AD, SL)
9.00 BBC News
10.30 Antiques Road Trip (r)
11.15 Homes Under the Hammer (r)
12.15pm Bargain Hunt (r) (AD)
1.00 Richard Osman's House of Games (r)
1.30 The Finish Line. Quiz (r)
2.15 Do You Know Your Place? (r)
2.45 The Farmers' Country Showdown (r)
3.30 Spy in the Ocean (r) (AD)
4.30 Vintage Antiques Roadshow (r)
5.15 Flog It! From the RAF Museum in Hendon, north London (r)
6.00 Richard Osman's House of Games. With Chris Bisson, Danielle Harold, Katharine Merry and Robert Webb (r)
6.30 Bear Grylls: Wild Reckoning. An estranged brother and sister reunite (r) (AD)

7.00 Live European Athletics Championships: Birmingham 2026 Gabby Logan presents coverage of the evening session on day three from Alexander Stadium, including the start of the women's hammer final. Coverage continues on BBC1

8.00 The Repair Shop Experts restore a photo of President Kennedy's children with their English nanny, a tiny drum kit clock that no longer ticks, a melted wax statuette and a traditional Venezuelan stringed instrument (r) (AD)

9.00 Murder Trial Former gamekeeper David Campbell stands accused of the murder of Brian Low, a 65-year-old groundsman on the same estate where they both worked. *See picks of the day* (1/2) (AD)

10.00 Inside No 9 Shane and Clifford come up with a plan to abduct the wife of a hedge fund manager (4/6) (r) (AD)

10.30 Newsnight Headline analysis presented by Katie Razzall

11.05 Evolution Chris Packham reveals why the horse become so fast as he sets out on an odyssey that explores the evolutionary beginnings of animal movement (5/5) (r) (AD)

12.05am FILM: Kindling (12, 2023) Upon learning their friend has a terminal illness, a group of mates return home to fulfil his final wishes. Coming-of-age drama, inspired by true events, starring George Somner and Conrad Khan **1.35-2.25** Sign Zone: Amityville: An Origin Story (r) (AD, SL)

ITV1

6.00am Good Morning Britain
10.00 This Morning
1.30pm ITV News; Weather
2.00 Dickinson's Real Deal. The team heads to Grimsby, where Simon Schneider falls in love with a necklace, Karen Dalmeny faces her worst nightmare and David Ford takes a trip down memory lane (r) (AD)
3.00 Deal or No Deal. Stephen Mulhern hosts as another contestant tries to open the 22 red boxes in the right order, taking on the infamous Banker for the chance to win a life-changing cash prize (r) (AD)
4.00 Tipping Point. Ben Shephard hosts the arcade-themed quiz in which contestants drop tokens down a choice of four chutes in the hope of winning a £10,000 jackpot (r)
5.00 The Chase. Contestants from London, Ely, Lincolnshire and Glasgow work together as a team to face one of the country's finest quiz brains. Bradley Walsh hosts (r)
6.00 Regional News; Weather
6.30 ITV News; Weather

7.00 Live Pre-Season Football: Manchester United v Leeds United (Kick-off **7.30**). Hugh Woozencroft presents coverage of the friendly at Croke Park in Dublin. Normally used for Gaelic sports, this is the first time this 80,000 capacity venue has hosted a club association football match, and while a friendly in name, it is likely to be a highly competitive contest given the historic rivalry between the teams. With analysis from John O'Shea and Michael Brown, commentary by Sam Matterface and Lucy Ward, and reports from Gabriel Clarke. *See picks of the day*

10.00 ITV News at Ten; Weather; followed by Regional News

10.45 Long Lost Family: Born Without Trace Davina McCall and Nicky Campbell help foundlings Michael and Christine uncover why their mothers abandoned them (r) (AD)

11.45 Cause of Death Celebrities are interviewed by neurodivergent individuals (r)

12.10am Shop on TV 3.00 Love & Death. Detectives intensify their questioning (r) (AD, SL) **3.55** Inside the Langham: Britain's First Grand Hotel. The hostelry's MD oversees progress on the Langham Venice (r) (AD, SL) **4.20** Unwind **5.35-6.00** Tom Kerridge Cooks Italy (r) (AD, SL)

Channel 4

6.30am The King of Queens (r) (AD)
7.45 Everybody Loves Raymond (r) (AD)
9.10 Frasier (r) (AD)
11.10 Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA (r)
12.05pm Channel 4 News Summary
12.10 Find It, Fix It, Flog It. Henry Cole and Simon O'Brien find unique items in Gloucestershire (r) (AD)
1.10 The Great House Giveaway. A tailor's assistant and builder join forces to renovate a West Yorkshire house (r)
2.10 Countdown. With Pauline McLynn
3.00 A Place in the Sun. A house hunter from Leicester tries to find her dream holiday home on Spain's Costa Almería (r)
4.00 Saving Country Houses with Penelope Keith. Four visitors go on a night-time ghost hunt in Britain's most haunted castle (r) (AD)
5.00 Château DIY. Love is in the air at Chateau de Sauge (r) (AD)
6.00 American Pickers. Frank Fritz falls hard for a Harley-Davidson "knucklehead" at a collector's California compound (r) (AD)

7.00 Channel 4 News

8.00 Extraordinary Extensions Tinie Tempah follows a couple as they renovate an old Canterbury B&B by adding an extension — only to find a wartime bomb shelter in the garden. *See picks of the day* (AD)

9.00 Spy Next Door: The Anna Chapman Story The story of Anna Chapman, the British businesswoman and model unmasked by the FBI in 2010 as part of a Russian spy ring. *See picks of the day* (1/2) (AD)

10.00 24 Hours in A&E The stories of Queen's patients who are an inspiration to their loved ones and how they have jointly faced some of the biggest challenges of their lives (3/10) (r) (AD)

11.05 999: On the Front Line The paramedics plan to take a woman in the advanced stages of labour to hospital, but when her waters suddenly break, they have to think again. A diabetic man has a painful urine infection, and a 14-month-old is choking and will not feed (r)

12.10am Celebrity Hunted A daring escape plot is hatched in Brighton (r) (AD, SL) **2.00** Ramsay's Hotel Hell (r) (AD, SL) **2.50** Dover 24/7: Britain's Busiest Port (r) (AD, SL) **3.45** Fur Babies (r) (AD, SL) **4.40** Kirstie's House of Craft (r) **4.55** Couples Come Dine with Me (r) **5.50-6.30** Countdown (r)

5

6.00am Milkshake!
9.15 Jeremy Vine
11.30 Storm & Alexis
12.45pm 5 News at Lunchtime
12.50 Matt Allwright
2.20 FILM: Deadly Secrets (PG, TVM, 2023) When Jade finds out about her mother's financial problems, she commits a series of high-profile burglaries to pay off her mother's debts. Thriller with Lizzie Boys
4.00 Castle. Detective Ryan ends up in the middle of an assassination plot when he is on the security detail of a charismatic congressman (r)
4.55 Love Nature. An edible forest garden in Holywood, Co Down (r)
5.00 5 News with Dan Walker
6.00 Sicily: Jewel of the Med. Cameras focus on the largest island in the Mediterranean, home to Mount Etna and stunning coastlines. There's also a look at an ambitious restoration project (r)
6.55 5 News Update

7.00 Car Pound Cops Tracking cars as they are seized for a variety of offences with exclusive access to car pounds, police forces, local council enforcement agencies and national organisations (7/8) (r)

7.55 5 News Update

8.00 Casualty 24/7: Every Second Counts New series. A 82-year-old is brought to Barnsley Casualty after suffering a fall in her kitchen, and a 78-year-old caretaker has chest pains and dangerously low oxygen levels

9.00 999: Critical Condition A woman fights for her life after an unexplained collapse, and an 82-year-old's life is at risk of pneumonia after sustaining multiple chest injuries (5/6)

10.00 Ambulance: Code Red Medical professionals treat a man who has collapsed at the wheel of his car, a 72-year-old with an open fracture and a 22-year-old suffering from a prolonged epileptic seizure (r) (AD)

11.05 Cause of Death A homeless man is found dead in his temporary accommodation in Blackburn and paramedics are called to the flat of a woman who has been found dead after complaining of a bad chest (9/10) (r)

12.05am A&E After Dark (r) (AD) **1.00** Cruise TV (r) **2.00** GPs: Behind Closed Doors (r) **2.50** Castle (r) **3.40** Friends (r) (AD) **4.35** Cruising with Susan Calman (r) (AD, SL) **5.25** Entertainment News on 5 **5.35** Paw Patrol (r) (SL) **5.45-6.00** The Adventures of Paddington (r) (SL)

television

Live Pre-Season Football
ITV1, 7pm

The World Cup was one thing but have we reached peak football as ITV devotes an evening to a pre-season warm-up match? The Premier League season starts on August 21, but tonight Manchester United and Leeds United meet (kick-off 7.30pm) at the 82,300-capacity Croke Park stadium in Dublin — the first football fixture at this venue since 2009 when Ireland lost 1-0 to France. **JC**

Extraordinary Extensions
Channel 4, 8pm

Two more extensions for the rapper Tinie Tempah to follow, starting with a "radical mash-up" of a B&B in Canterbury. There are Norwegian and Korean influences in the project, reflecting the nationalities of the owners. And the dig unearths a Second World War bomb shelter, which they turn into a speakeasy. The second extension is a blast from the past as a Miss Vintage UK finalist transforms her bungalow in Nottingham into a 1960s Hollywood time capsule. **JC**

STREAMING CHOICE

Reacher
Prime Video

This fourth series based on Lee Child's novels is about a former military police investigator turned crime-fighting drifter — *The Littlest Hobo* with bigger muscles. Jack Reacher (Alan Ritchson) begins this season in Philadelphia, where he is drawn into a conspiratorial web after witnessing a woman's suicide. The plot that unravels allows Reacher to showcase his formidable powers of deduction and his ability to crush a man to death in unusual ways. *See review, page 11.* **VS**

FILM CHOICE

Brighton Rock (PG, 1947)
Talking Pictures TV, 8.35pm

Richard Attenborough, aged only 24, creates one of the most chilling antiheroes in British cinema: baby-faced psychopath Pinkie Brown takes an unsettling satisfaction in his capacity for cruelty and ruthlessness. Young waitress Rose Brown (Carol Marsh) discovers this to her cost. When Pinkie finds she might be the loose end that could tie him to a recent murder, he does the logical thing: marries her, then sets about ruining her life. Tough-as-nails direction from John Boulting makes this the definitive version of Graham Greene's novel. (89min) **Wendy Ide**

BBC4
7.00pm Villages by the Sea (1/10) **7.30** Wainwright Walks (AD) **8.00** The Treasures of Ancient Rome. Alastair Sooke explores ancient Roman art (3/3) **9.00** Mary Beard's Ultimate Rome: Empire Without Limit. The scholar explores the physical world of the Roman Empire (2/4) (AD) **10.00** I, Claudius. Piso and his wife Plancina are charged with Germanicus's murder (5/12) **10.50** I, Claudius. Lollia is unable to live with the memory of being abused by Tiberius and commits suicide (6/12) **11.45** The Treasures of Ancient Rome. Last in the series **12.45am** Inside the Bat Cave (AD) **1.45** Wainwright Walks (AD) **2.15** Villages by the Sea (SL) **2.45am-3.45** Mary Beard's Ultimate Rome: Empire Without Limit (AD, SL)

Sky Arts
6.00am Classic FM Live at the Movies **8.00** Artist of the Year: Masterclass (AD) **9.00** Tales of the Unexpected (AD) **10.00** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **11.00** Discovering: Rex Harrison (AD) **12.00** The Art of Film with Ian Nathan (AD) **1.00pm** Tales of the Unexpected (AD) **2.00** The Alfred Hitchcock Hour **3.00** The Eighties (AD) **4.00** Discovering: Yul Brynner (AD) **5.00** Portrait Artist of the Year 2022 (AD) **6.00** Tales of the Unexpected (AD) **7.00** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **7.30** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **8.00** Voices of the Valleys **9.00** Battle of the Irish Dancers **10.00** The Eighties (AD) **11.00** The Art of Architecture **12.00** The Pilgrimage of Gilbert & George. A profile of the art duo (AD) **2.00am-4.00** Statues Redressed

More4
8.55am Find It, Fix It, Flog It (AD) **10.00** Four in a Bed **12.40pm** Come Dine with Me (AD) **3.20** Four in a Bed **5.50** Car SOS (AD) **7.55** Grand Designs. Kevin McCloud meets a couple who are building a giant new home on a 16-acre plot in Lincolnshire (2/7) (AD) **9.00** The Roman Empire by Train with Alice Roberts. Alice heads seven miles south of Naples to Herculaneum (AD) **10.00** 24 Hours in Police Custody. Bedfordshire Police investigate a knife and gun attack on the doorstep of a man's house (AD) **11.05** 24 Hours in A&E. A builder breaks his neck after falling off his shed (2/8) (AD) **12.10am** Emergency Helicopter Medics (AD) **1.15** 24 Hours in Police Custody (AD) **2.15** 24 Hours in A&E (AD) **3.20-3.50** A Place in the Sun

Live sport today

Aston Villa's Ollie Watkins

Live The Hundred: Welsh Fire Women v London Spirit Women Sky Sports Cricket, 11.15am-2.30pm, Sky Sports Main Event, 11.30am-2.30pm (Start-time **11.30**). Coverage from Sophia Gardens in Cardiff

Live The Hundred: Birmingham Phoenix Men v MI London Men Sky Sports Main Event, Sky Sports Cricket, 6pm-9.30 (Start-time **6.30**). Coverage of the match at Edgbaston

Live Uefa Super Cup: Paris Saint-Germain v Aston Villa TNT Sports 1, 7pm-10.30 (Kick-off **8.00**). Coverage from Red Bull Arena in Austria

Live MLB: St Louis Cardinals v Philadelphia Phillies TNT Sports 2, 7.15pm-10 (Start-time **7.15**). Coverage of the National League match from Busch Stadium

Live Tennis Sky Sports Tennis, 11pm-4am The Canadian Open. Coverage from day 11 of the ATP 1000 event in Montreal and the WTA 1000 event in Toronto

Talking Pictures
6.00am FILM: A Matter of Choice (PG, 1963) (b/w) **7.40 FILM: Death Goes to School (U, 1953)** (b/w) **8.55 FILM: The Black Tent (U, 1956) 10.45 FILM: The Long Duel (U, 1967) 1.00pm** The Buccaneers (b/w) **1.30** Carrie's War **3.20** Look at Life **3.45** Dial 999 (b/w) **4.15 FILM: Robbery Under Arms (U, 1957)** **6.15** Melbourne Cleaners **6.30** Give Us a Clue **7.00** Out of Town **7.30** Travelling Man (7/7) **8.35 FILM: Brighton Rock (PG, 1948)** Thriller starring Richard Attenborough. *See film choice* (b/w) **10.25 FILM: Up the Chastity Belt (PG, 1971)** Medieval comedy starring Frankie Howerd **12.15am FILM: The Four Feathers (U, 1939) 2.30 FILM: Women Without Men (PG, 1956)** (b/w) **4.00-5.00** Stagecoach West (b/w)

Film4
11.00am Secret Headquarters (PG, 2022) Comedy adventure starring Owen Wilson **1.05pm Sign of the Pagan (U, 1954)** Historical drama starring Jack Palance **2.55 The Comancheros (PG, 1961)** Western starring John Wayne **5.05 They Rode West (U, 1954)** Western starring Robert Francis **6.50 Fisherman's Friends: One and All (12, 2022)** Comedy sequel starring James Purefoy (AD) **9.00 Mission: Impossible — Rogue Nation (12, 2015)** The agents of the Impossible Mission Force become fugitives in order to bring down a shadowy society of assassins. Spy thriller sequel with Tom Cruise (AD) **11.40 The Rhythm Section (15, 2020)** Thriller starring Blake Lively **1.50am-3.45 Holy Cow (15, 2024)** Comedy drama starring Clément Faveau and Maïwene Barthelemy

BBC3
7.00pm The Catch Up **7.05** Deadly 60 **7.30** Deadly 60. Part one of two. Steve Backshall encounters an armoured predator in the Philippines **8.00** Top Gear. Richard Hammond meets an extraordinary rally team made up of amputees **9.00** Top Gear. The presenters take on their Australian counterparts **10.00** Guy Montgomery's Guy Mont-Spelling Bee. A fresh panel of comedians take part **10.50** Guy Montgomery's Guy Mont-Spelling Bee. Guy challenges the contestants to wear and spell their hats as Aaron Chen debuts his new side hustle **11.35** This Country (AD) **12.00** This Country (AD) **2.00am** Dinosaur (AD) **3.25am-3.45** My Mate's a Bad Date (r)

ITV2
6.00am Backyard Builds (SL) **6.30** Dress to Impress (AD, SL) **7.30** The Real Housewives of Potomac **8.20** The Real Housewives of Orange County **9.15** The Only Way Is Essex **10.15** Dawson's Creek **11.10** Charmed **12.10pm** Deal or No Deal (AD) **1.10** Supermarket Sweep **2.10** The Floor (AD) **3.10** The Only Way Is Essex **4.10** The Real Housewives of Potomac. Karen meets with Mia **5.00** The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills. Erika seeks to rebuild her life after her husband's indictment **6.00** Celebrity Catchphrase (AD) **7.00** The Floor (AD) **8.00** The 1% Club (AD) **9.00** Family Guy (AD) **11.35** American Dad! (AD) **12.35am** Bob's Burgers (AD) **1.30** G'wed (AD, SL) **2.00am-2.25** Transaction (AD, SL)

ITV3
6.00am George and Mildred **7.05** Classic Emmerdale (AD) **8.10** Classic Coronation Street (AD) **9.10** Agatha Christie's Poirot (AD) **11.30** Heartbeat (AD) **1.35pm** Midsomer Murders (AD) **3.35** Classic Emmerdale (AD) **4.40** Classic Coronation Street (AD) **5.50** Heartbeat (AD) **8.00** Midsomer Murders. A farmer is found dead in Midsomer Mow (AD) **10.00** Grantchester. A murder at Esme's office sends shockwaves through the Keating family, and Alphy's meeting with the Bishop fails to go as planned (5/8) (AD) **11.00** Grantchester (6/8) (AD) **11.50** Trial & Retribution. Part one of two. A police commander is murdered (9/10) **1.25am-2.20** Agatha Christie's Poirot. David Suchet stars (AD)

ITV4
6.00am Magnum, PI (AD) **8.00** Robin of Sherwood **9.10** Boon **10.15** The Professionals (AD) **11.20** Robin of Sherwood **12.30pm** Magnum, PI (AD) **2.35** The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes (AD) **3.45** Boon **4.50** The Professionals (AD) **5.50** Minder (AD) **6.55** Aussie Pickers **8.00** King of the Roads. More action from the Armoy Race of Legends **9.00 FILM: RoboCop 2 (18, 1990)** The cyborg law enforcer battles a deranged drug lord, unaware the corporation that created him is planning to replace him. Sci-fi thriller sequel starring Peter Weller and Nancy Allen (AD) **11.15** All Elite Wrestling: Collision. Hard-hitting wrestling action **1.15am** The Professionals (AD) **2.15am-2.40** Two and a Half Men

U&Drama
6.00am Teleshopping **7.15** The Bill **8.10** Doctors **9.20** Classic Holby City **10.40** Casualty (AD) **11.40** The Bill **12.40pm** Classic EastEnders **2.00** Classic Neighbours **3.00** Whitstable Pearl (AD) **4.10** Lovejoy **5.20** As Time Goes By **6.00** Last of the Summer Wine **8.00** The Chelsea Detective. The owner of a fruit and vegetable delivery company is found brutally stabbed in his own home (7/9) (AD) **9.00** The Chelsea Detective. Investigations reveal that Kai had broken into Jack's house (8/9) (AD) **10.00** New Tricks. A paedophile confesses to the murder of a child 25 years previously (3/10) (AD) **11.20** Luther (2/4) (AD) **12.40am** Lovejoy **1.50** Sister Boniface Mysteries (AD) **2.50-4.00am** Hotel Portofino (SL)

Variations
BBC1 N Ireland
10.40pm The Big Deal with Steph McGovern 11.40 MOTD: Uefa Super Cup Highlights 12.10am FILM: Red Eye (2005) 1.30am-6.00 BBC News

BBC1 Scotland
12.25am Scotcast (r) 12.55 The Hit List Celebrity Special (r) 1.45am-6.00 BBC News

BBC1 Wales
11.10pm Undercover: Cancer Cure or Con? (r) 11.30 FILM: Red Eye (2005) 12.45am-6.00 BBC News

UTV
11.05pm UTV at the Fleadh. The world's largest celebration of Irish music and culture heads to Belfast 11.20pm-11.45 Inside the Langham: Britain's First Grand Hotel. Documentary (r)

BBC Scotland
7.00pm Reporting Scotland: News at Seven 7.30 Scotland's Home of the Year 2024 (r) 8.00 Island Crossings. Multiple ferry breakdowns threaten to maroon islanders over Easter (r) 9.00 Black Black Oil (r) 10.00 River City. Tommy collapses after being diagnosed with a concussion 10.30 Icons of Football (r) 11.00 Scotcast 11.30pm-12.00 The Trials That Shocked Scotland (r)

S4C
6.00pm Dan Do (r) 6.30 Adeiladu'r Freuddwyd: Camp Out West (r) 6.59 News 7.00 Heno 7.30 News; Weather 8.00 Pobol y Cwm. Eleri plans a surprise for Jinx 8.25 Cartrefi Cymru (r) 8.55 News 9.00 Sioe Môn 2026. Highlights from the Anglesey County Show 10.00 Y Deis (r) 10.30-11.35pm Ty Ffit (r)

PBS America
8.00am Weathered: Earth's Extremes **8.35** Digging Up Britain's Past **9.35** Athens: Birth of Democracy **10.40** 1066: A Year to Conquer England **11.55** Inside Japan's War **1.00pm** Weathered: Earth's Extremes **1.35** Digging Up Britain's Past **2.35** Athens: Birth of Democracy **3.50** 1066: A Year to Conquer England **5.05** Inside Japan's War. Documentary **6.10** Digging Up Britain's Past **7.15** Athens: Birth of Democracy. The origins of democracy in Greece 2,500 years ago **8.25** 1066: A Year to Conquer England. Duke William leads his invasion fleet across the Channel **9.40** Inside Japan's War **10.50** Athens: Birth of Democracy **12.00** 1066: A Year to Conquer England **1.15am-2.00** Weathered: Earth's Extremes

Sky Atlantic
6.00am Fish Town (r) **8.00** Billions (r) (AD) **10.15** House of the Dragon (r) (AD) **12.35pm** Homicide: Life on the Street (r) **2.30** Billions (r) (AD) **4.40** The Last of Us (r) (AD) **6.35** House of the Dragon (r) (AD) **7.45** House of the Dragon. Rhaenyra continues her search for a suitable match (r) (AD) **9.00** House of the Dragon. *Game of Thrones* prequel following the story of House Targaryen starring Matt Smith. Last in the series (r) (AD) **10.25** Station Eleven. Elizabeth, Tyler and Clark confront an even more uncertain future (5/10) (r) **11.25** Station Eleven. Kirsten leaves the Traveling Symphony behind to track down the Prophet (6/10) (r) **12.25am** House of the Dragon. Double bill (r) (AD) **2.45** Billions. Double bill (r) (AD) **5.05am-6.00** The Guest Wing (r) (AD)

Sky Docs
8.00am The Directors (r) (AD) **9.00** 100 Foot Wave (r) (AD) **10.00** Juan Carlos: Downfall of the King (r) **10.55** Celtics City (r) (AD) **12.00** Yacht Rock: A Dockumentary (r) **2.00pm** An American Bombing: The Road to April 19th (r) (AD) **4.00** The Directors (r) (AD) **4.55** Discovering: Tom Cruise (r) (AD) **5.50** Burden of Proof: Who Killed Jennifer Pandos? (r) (AD) **8.00** Six Silent Killings: Ireland's Vanishing Triangle (r) (AD) **9.00** Six Silent Killings: Ireland's Vanishing Triangle (r) (AD) **10.00** Groomed: The Truth Behind the Lie. Documentary (2/3) (r) (AD) **11.00 FILM: Going Clear — Scientology and the Prison of Belief (15, 2015)** Documentary **1.15am** The Essex Murders (r) (AD) **4.15** The Directors (r) (AD) **5.05-6.00** Discovering (r) (AD)

U&Yesterday
6.10am Abandoned Engineering (AD) **8.00** Bangers & Cash: Restoring Classics (AD) **10.00** Secret Nazi Bases **11.00** Hitler's Countdown to War **12.00** Antiques Roadshow **2.00pm** Bangers & Cash (AD) **4.00** Secret Nazi Bases **5.00** Hitler's Countdown to War **6.00** Antiques Roadshow **7.00** A Perfect Planet. The impact of the uneven distribution of fresh water around the globe (AD) **8.00** Michael Palin: Travels of a Lifetime. Michael Palin looks back on the making of Pole to Pole **9.00** Simon Reeve's South America. The vast white salt flats of Bolivia **10.00** Bangers & Cash (AD) **11.00** Bangers & Cash (AD) **12.00** Bangers & Cash: Restoring Classics (AD) **1.00am** Find It, Fix It, Flog It **2.00** Abandoned Engineering (AD) **3.00am-6.10** Teleshopping

MindGames

Poker Byron Jacobs

Carry on regardless

The previous two articles focused on a modern feature of online poker rooms. In cash games there often arise situations where one player is all-in, so no further betting can be made. It is simply a matter of dealing out the remaining cards and awarding the pot to the winner. At this point each player has a certain equity in the pot. It may be that it is close to 50-50 or maybe one player is a huge favourite with 95 per cent.

The feature the sites have introduced is that, at this moment, they offer to pay you your equity in the pot. So, when the pot is $100 and you have 62 per cent equity, you can take a guaranteed $62 instead of letting luck decide whether you get $100 or zero. However, as always, there is a catch. The site (usually) charges a one per cent "admin fee". So you don't get your "fair" $62, you get $61.38 instead ($0.62 goes to the site). In poker terms whether or not you should accept this deal is a no-brainer. You shouldn't. By taking it, you are turning an asset worth $62 into one worth $61.38. This is not good poker.

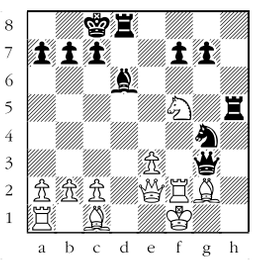
Nevertheless many players (myself included) who understand exactly what they are doing, will – occasionally – hit the "accept" button when this offer pops up. Why? Usually it's because things haven't gone our way so far in the session and we've been the recipients of some ugly misfortune. In this particular hand we are a big favourite, maybe having 90 per cent equity in a sizeable pot. Taking this pot down will do a lot for our mental equanimity, while having it snatched away by yet more horrible luck will be hard to ride psychologically. We believe that this will trigger us and our subsequent play in the session will be some way off our "A game". So, we reason that making a tiny payment to avoid this "inevitable deterioration" is, in the long run, a good thing. Is this a reasonable argument?

It's hard to be dogmatic about this, but probably not. Without wishing to sound overly dramatic, poker is like boxing. You may win or you may lose but if you step into the ring you are probably going to get hurt. Of course, unless you decide to play in an underground game, you aren't likely to actually get punched in the face but you will (with absolute inevitability) suffer psychological pain at some point. It is better that you learn to roll with the punches (rather than trying to avoid them altogether) because, as the saying goes, what doesn't kill you makes you stronger.

So, what do I do when I'm playing and find myself being seriously tempted to hit the "accept" button or even actually doing so? Easy. I gather my thoughts and decide that it's getting late, I'm tired and I really ought to go to bed. And then carry on playing anyway ...

For more puzzles, including Mini Sudoku, extra Codeword, Train Tracks and Futoshiki
go to page 10

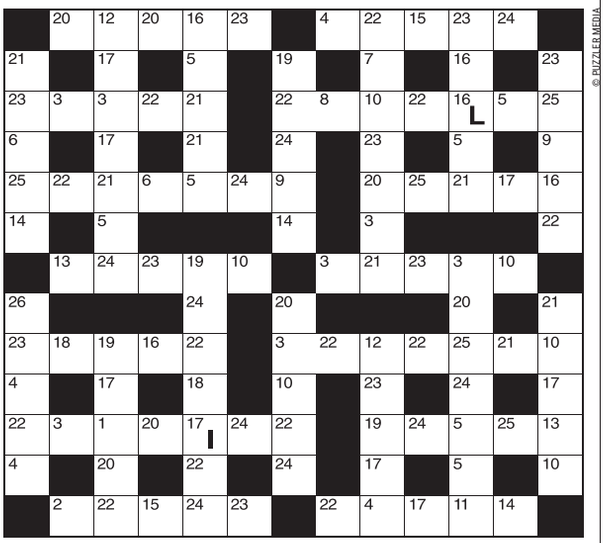
Winning Move



Black to play.
This position is from Ferey-Arslanov, Titled Tuesday, chess.com 2026.

Black has given up a piece to expose the opponent's king. White, now lacking any pawn cover, has enlisted the services of the queen, rook and bishop to provide alternative arrangements. However, this proved inadequate and Black now crashed through in fine style with a sacrificial cascade. Can you see how?

Codeword No 5917



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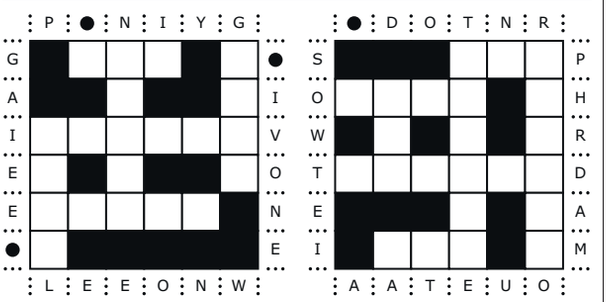
A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

Every letter in this crossword-style grid is represented by a number from 1 to 26. Each letter of the alphabet appears in the grid at least once. Use the letters already provided to work out the identity of further letters. Enter letters in the main grid and the smaller reference grid until all 26 letters of the alphabet have been accounted for. Proper nouns are excluded. *Yesterday's solution, right*

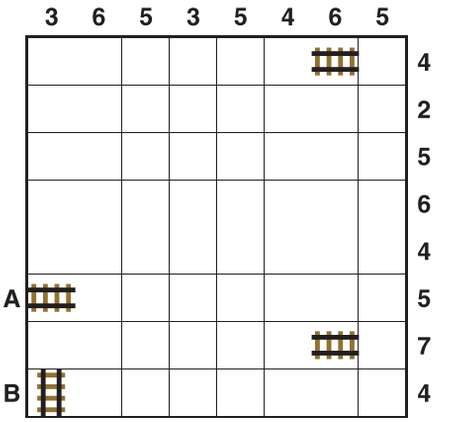
Cluelines **Stuck on Codeword?** To receive 4 random clues call 0901 293 6262 or text TIMECODE to 64343. Calls cost £1 plus your telephone company's network access charge. Texts cost £1 plus your standard network charge. For the full solution call 0905 757 0142. If you have an old newspaper and need clues from the past 7 days, call 0905 624 0024. Calls to 0905 cost £1 per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri, 9am-5.30pm).

Lexica Easy No 9049 Hard No 9050



Slide the letters either horizontally or vertically back into the grid to produce a completed crossword. Letters are allowed to slide over other letters

Train Tracks No 2942



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Lay tracks to enable the train to travel from village A to village B. The numbers indicate how many sections of track go in each row and column. There are only straight sections and curved sections. The track cannot cross itself.

Quintagram® No 2644

Solve all five **cryptic** clues using each letter underneath once only

1 Maybe Adelaide's wine (4)

– – – –

2 Best about to enter river (5)

– – – – –

3 Register German worker in wood (6)

– – – – – –

4 Chuckling wobbled large hut (8)

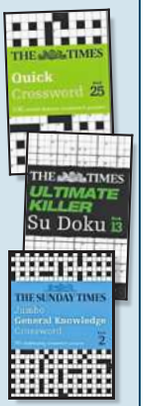
– – – – – – – –

5 Immersed vertical barrier unsettled (9)

– – – – – – – – –

A	A	A	C	E	E	E	G
G	G	G	H	I	L	L	L
L	M	N	O	O	O	P	R
R	R	R	T	T	U	W	W

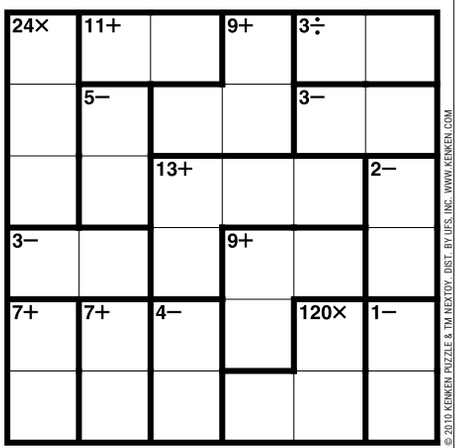
Challenge your mind with puzzle books from The Times



timesbookshop.co.uk

Solve Ponder crossword on Wednesdays and Fridays at thetimes.com/puzzles and on the Live app

KenKen Medium No 6909



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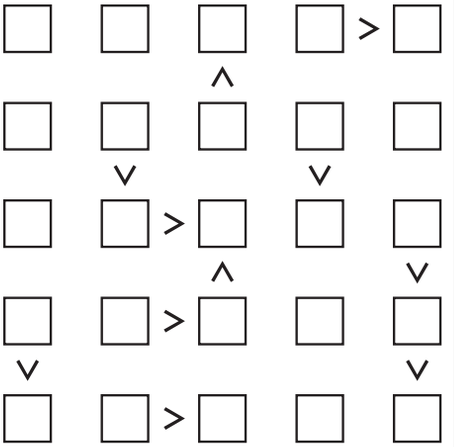
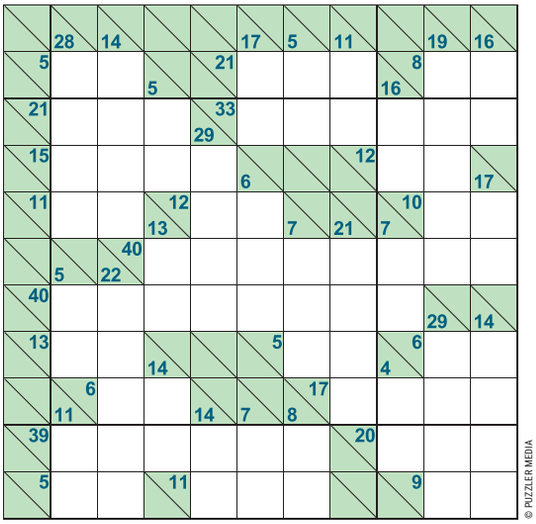
All the digits 1 to 6 must appear in every row and column. In each thick-line "block", the target number in the top left-hand corner is calculated from the digits in all the cells in the block, using the operation indicated by the symbol.

Futoshiki No 5457



Fill the blank squares so that every row and column contains each of the numbers 1 to 5 once only. The symbols between the squares indicate whether a number is larger (>) or smaller (<) than the number next to it.

Kakuro No 4416



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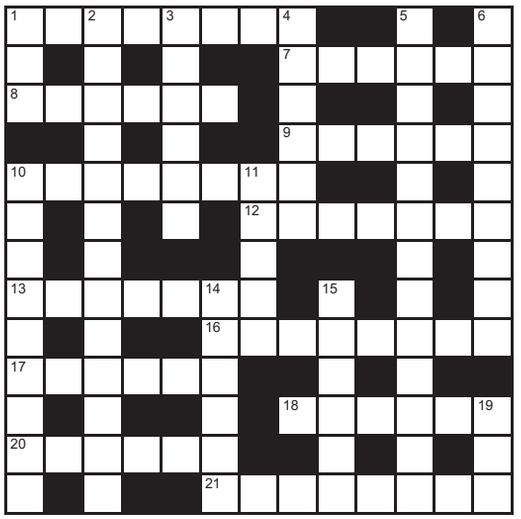
Fill the grid using the numbers 1 to 9 only. The numbers in each horizontal or vertical run of white squares add up to the total in the triangle to its left or above it. The same number may occur more than once in a row or column, but not within the same run of white squares.

MindGames

times2 Crossword No 10,233



Across

1 Induced trance-like state (8)
7 Pacific island nation (6)
8 Diatribe (6)
9 Contact by telephone (4,2)
10 Artistic (8)
12 Strip of hair raised when surprised or suspicious (7)
13 Mythical hybrid creature (7)
16 One ensuring that rules are strictly adhered to (8)
17 Roguish (6)
18 Wrongful (6)
20 Cover (a roof) with reeds or straw (6)
21 Light musical drama (8)

Down

1 Very spicy (3)
2 At right angles to the horizontal (13)
3 Curious anomaly (6)
4 Floor of a building (6)
5 Makeshift tribunal (8,5)
6 Explosive mixture (9)
10 Deep brown colour (9)
11 Person who abstains from using animal products (5)
14 Resonate once more (2-4)
15 With less delay (6)
19 Afternoon or evening meal (3)

Solution to Crossword 10,232

R	E	S	E	A	R	C	H		S	P	E	C
E	K		R		L			A		O		
B	A	Y		C	L	A	Y		D	R	A	Y
U		B		H		M		T		K		O
S	E	L	F	I	M	P	O	R	T	A	N	T
		U		M		S		O				E
H	E	E	D	E	D		E	G	R	E	S	S
O				D		S		L		P		
P	R	O	J	E	C	T	I	O	N	I	S	T
E		R		S		A		D		T		R
F	R	A	Y		G	R	A	Y		H	A	Y
U		T			C		T		E		O	
L	E	E	R		T	H	R	E	A	T	E	N

Need help with today's puzzle? Call 0905 757 0143 to check the answers. Calls cost £1 per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri 9am-5.30pm).

Bridge Andrew Robson

Modern Bidding Developments
32. Fourth Suit Forcing (FSF)
The default reply

After the first three bids are in different suits, a bid of the fourth suit sets up a game-force and asks for more info. Opener prioritises shape before a stopper in the fourth suit.

However, say opener has neither extra shape, nor a stopper in the fourth suit. Say the auction has begun 1♥-1♠-2♣-2♦ (FSF). What now with this hand?

♠82
♥AQ642
♦43
♣AQ32

The answer is to bid 2♠. Here's the point, the logic of which we discussed last lesson. If opener had one more spade and one fewer diamond (♠832, ♥AQ642, ♦4, ♣AQ32), she'd have raised 1♠ to 2♠. While if she were too good to raise to 2♠ eg make a diamond into ♠A (♠A82, ♥AQ642, ♦4, ♣AQ32), now she would rebid 2♣ but she'd jump to 3♠ over 2♦. (NB: opener should jump to FSF with 16 or more points).

Back to our main hand. Going back to 2♠ is always (in the modern style) a doubleton spade — and it needn't contain an honour. It's what you bid with no extra shape to show, nor a stopper in the fourth suit for Notrumps.

How should responder react to it? Say the auction has started 1♥-1♠-2♣-2♦-2♠. What now with these FSF hands?

♠AK82 ♥32 ♦K72 ♣KQ82
♠AJ643 ♥K62 ♦AK4 ♣J4
♠KJ7532 ♥3 ♦A74 ♣KQ3

With the first, bid 3♣ — stage two of your plan to support clubs via FSF to set up a game-force.

Bid 3♥. Go ahead with your plan to raise hearts game-forcing via FSF. Don't be deflected into spades — opener has only two.

Bid 4♠ — but you need six cards (or five really good ones) to do that.

Dealer: North
Vul: Neither

	♠64 ♥AK542 ♦76 ♣AJ62	
♠105 ♥108 ♦A10832 ♣Q753	N W E S	♠QJ98 ♥QJ96 ♦K95 ♣98
	♠AK732 ♥73 ♦QJ4 ♣K104	

S	W	N	E
		1♥	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♦(1)	Pass	2♠(2)	Pass
2NT	Pass	3NT	End

(1) FSF — setting up a game-force and asking for more information (shape prioritising).
(2) The default reply, showing only two cards.

West led ♦3 to ♦K, East returning ♦9 (top of two) and West letting ♦Q win. Declarer needed four club tricks (her only hope) and led ♣K. If both opponents had played tiddly clubs, she'd have continued with ♣4 to ♣J (catering to West's ♣Qx holding).

However, East followed with ♣8. This caused declarer to lead ♣10 next (key play). She planned to run it but West covered with ♣Q, to ♣A and East's ♣9. Declarer now crossed to ♠A and led ♣4 to (♣5 and) ♣6. Boom — East discarded, so declarer could cash ♣J and claim nine tricks.

andrew.robson@thetimes.co.uk

Brain Trainer

EASY 12	+ 18	x 5	+ 22	− 10	+ 2	÷ 41	x 12	DOUBLE IT	÷ 8	ANSWER
MEDIUM 114	+ 20	HALVE IT	+ 3	x 6	÷ 7	15% OF IT	x 8	TREBLE IT	÷ 8	ANSWER
HARDER 145	x 5	DOUBLE IT	−⅖ OF IT	÷ 30	- 20	CUBE IT	+ 6	+ 45	÷ 60	ANSWER

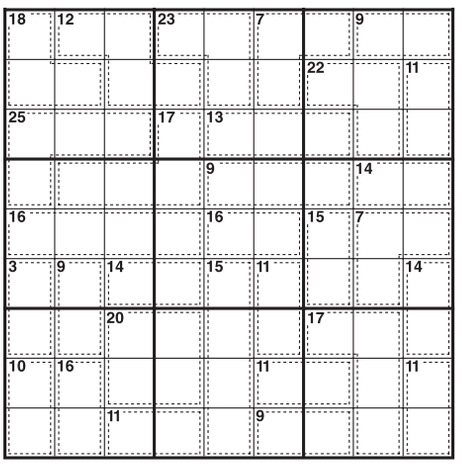
Polygon

From these letters, make words of **four** or more letters, always including the central letter. Answers must be in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, excluding capitalised words, plurals, conjugated verbs (past tense etc), adverbs ending in LY, comparatives and superlatives.
How you rate 9 words, average; 13, good; 21, very good; 30, excellent

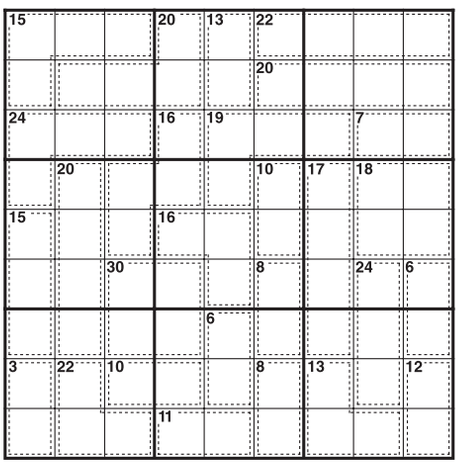
Yesterday's answers

adult, auld, daft, dal, dale, date, deaf, deal, def, **default**, deft, delft, delta, dual, due, duel, duet, eld, fad, fade, feud, feudal, fluted, lad, lade, laud, lead, lud, tad, ted, udal

Killer Tricky No 10,872



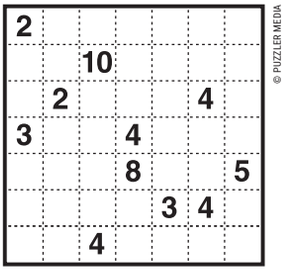
Killer Deadly No 10,873



As with standard Sudoku, fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Each set of cells joined by dotted lines must add up to the target number in its top-left corner. Within each set of cells joined by dotted lines, a digit cannot be repeated.

Cluelines Stuck on Sudoku, Killer or KenKen? Call 0901 293 6263 before midnight to receive four clues for any of today's puzzles. Calls cost £1 plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri 9am-5.30pm).

Cell Blocks No 5800



Divide the grid into square or rectangular blocks, each containing one digit only. Every block must contain the number of cells indicated by the digit inside it.

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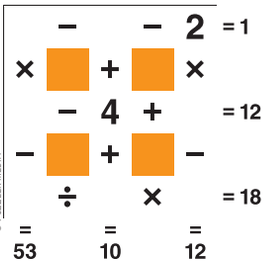
Set Square No 4419



Enter each of the numbers from 1 to 9 in the grid, so that the six sums work. We've placed two numbers to get you started. Each sum should be calculated left to right or top to bottom.

Please note, BODMAS does not apply

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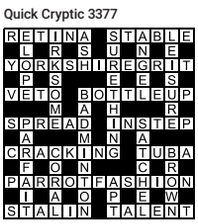
Solutions

Quick Cryptic 3377



Codeword 5916

Kakuro 4415

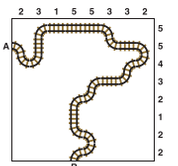
Sudoku 17,016

8	2	4	7	5	3	6	9	1
1	6	3	9	2	8	7	4	5
5	7	9	4	1	6	2	3	8
4	9	1	5	8	2	3	7	6
2	3	6	1	4	7	8	5	9
7	8	5	3	6	9	1	2	4
3	1	2	8	9	4	5	6	7
9	5	7	6	3	1	4	8	2
6	4	8	2	7	5	9	1	3

Tetonor 699

70	54	120	21
2 + 68	52 + 2	40 x 3	21 x 1
47	176	23	117
45 + 2	22 x 8	12 + 11	39 x 3
136	22	132	42
2 x 68	1 + 21	12 x 11	3 + 39
30	104	43	90
22 + 8	2 x 52	3 + 40	2 x 45

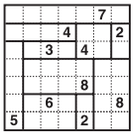
Train Tracks 2941



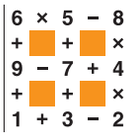
Sudoku 17,017

5	9	8	2	7	6	1	4	3
3	7	1	4	5	8	9	6	2
2	6	4	3	1	9	7	5	8
9	3	2	7	8	4	5	1	6
6	8	5	1	9	2	4	3	7
4	1	7	5	6	3	8	2	9
8	2	3	9	4	1	6	7	5
7	4	6	8	2	5	3	9	1
1	5	9	6	3	7	2	8	4

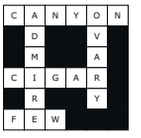
Cell Blocks 5799



Set Square 4418



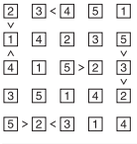
Lexica 9047



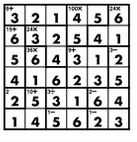
Sudoku 17,018

4	7	2	3	1	5	9	8	6
5	8	3	2	9	6	7	1	4
1	9	6	8	4	7	3	5	2
7	5	4	6	8	3	1	2	9
3	2	8	9	5	1	4	6	7
9	6	1	7	2	4	8	3	5
6	1	9	5	7	8	2	4	3
8	3	7	4	6	2	5	9	1
2	4	5	1	3	9	6	7	8

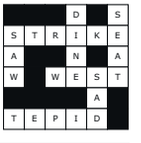
Futoshiki 5456



KenKen 6908



Lexica 9048



Killer 10,870

1	6	8	7	5	9	3	2	4
4	3	5	2	8	1	7	6	9
7	2	9	6	4	3	1	5	8
2	5	1	8	9	4	6	7	3
9	4	7	3	6	5	2	8	1
6	8	3	1	7	2	9	4	5
8	1	4	9	2	6	5	3	7
5	9	6	4	3	7	8	1	2
3	7	2	5	1	8	4	9	6

Killer 10,871

6	8	1	7	9	4	2	3	5
3	5	9	8	2	1	6	4	7
7	4	2	6	3	5	9	1	8
5	2	8	3	6	7	1	9	4
1	7	6	9	4	8	3	5	2
4	9	3	1	5	2	7	8	6
2	1	5	4	7	9	8	6	3
8	6	4	2	1	3	5	7	9
9	3	7	5	8	6	4	2	1

Today's solutions

Concise Quintagram
1 Bayou
2 Yippee
3 Woofer
4 Howler
5 Barkeeper

Cryptic Quintagram
1 Port
2 Cream
3 Logger
4 Laughter
5 Wallowing

Sakuro 4818

Brain Trainer
Easy 12
Medium 27
Harder 13

Word watch

Turnhalle (b) A building for gymnastics (*Collins*)
Aglet (b) The tag on the end of a shoelace (*Chambers*)
Doryphore (b) A self-righteously pedantic critic (*OED*)

Chess — Winning Move

1 ... Nh2+! 2 Kgl (2 Ke1 Rxf5 is hopeless as ... Ng4 is coming) and now a cascade of sacrifices: 2 ... Nf3+! 3 Qxf3 (3 Rxf3 meets the same fate) 3 ... Rh1+! 4 Kxh1 Qh2 mate

Quiz

1 Ice cream **2** Sicily **3** Alan Sugar **4** Drizzle **5** Arthur C Clarke **6** David Attenborough, as in the RRS Sir David Attenborough **7** Bat **8** Historiography **9** *The Winter's Tale*, referring to the character Antigonus **10** *Your Love is King* **11** Modest Mussorgsky **12** Marie-Antoine Carême **13** Labrum **14** Hull City **15** Lord Carrington

THE TIMES

12.08.26

MindGames

For extra puzzles
See page 10

Word watch
David Parfitt

Turnhalle
a The abode of the minor Norse gods
b A building for gymnastics
c A sunflower

Aglet
a A heron chick
b The tag on the end of a shoelace
c A fiery particle or spark

Doryphore
a A chemical released in scent marking
b A self-righteously pedantic critic
c A story of dubious authenticity

Answers on page 15

Sudoku

Difficult No 17,019

		1					7	
		7			8			9
					4		3	2
	4			5	1	6		
	8	5					2	
	3			9	7	1		
					2		4	8
		4			3			1
		8					6	

Fiendish No 17,020

			2					
				1	4		8	9
					5	6		2
4				7				
	2		8	9			7	
	3	7					1	
		6					3	
	8			6	7	9		
	4	5						

Super fiendish No 17,021

		7	8			2		
4	8		1			3		
	5				8		9	1
	1	4		3		5	6	
8	6		4				3	
		6			5		7	3
		8			7	1		

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Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

The Times Daily Quiz
Olav Bjortomt

1 Mr Whippy is a "soft-serve" brand of which dessert food?

2 Corleone is a town of about 11,000 people on which Italian island?

3 Which businessman said: "You couldn't sell a bone to Battersea dogs' home" on *The Apprentice*?

4 In aviation weather forecasts, DZ is an abbreviation for what type of rain?

5 Which English science fiction author wrote the 1997 novel *3001: The Final Odyssey*?

6 Launched in 2018, the UK's state-of-the-art polar research ship is named after which naturalist?

EVENING STANDARD/GETTY IMAGES

7 The soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) is one of the UK's most common species of what animal?

8 What is the study of history and how it is written?

9 Which Shakespeare play features the famous stage direction "Exit, pursued by bear"?

10 Reaching No 6, which 1984 song is Sade's only UK Top 10 hit single?

11 Which Russian composer's opera *Khovanshchina* was almost finished in piano score when he died in 1881?

12 Which "architect of French cuisine" wrote the culinary work *Le Pâtissier royal parisien* (1815)?

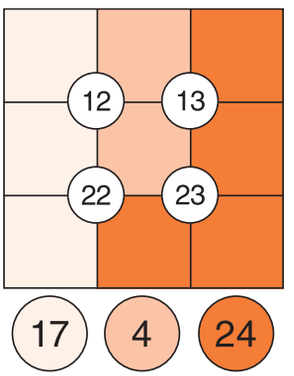
13 Which London menswear brand was founded in 2014 by Foday Dumbuya?

14 Acun Ilicali, known as the "Turkish Simon Cowell", owns which newly promoted Premier League football club?

15 Which foreign secretary, who became Nato secretary general, is pictured?

Answers on page 15

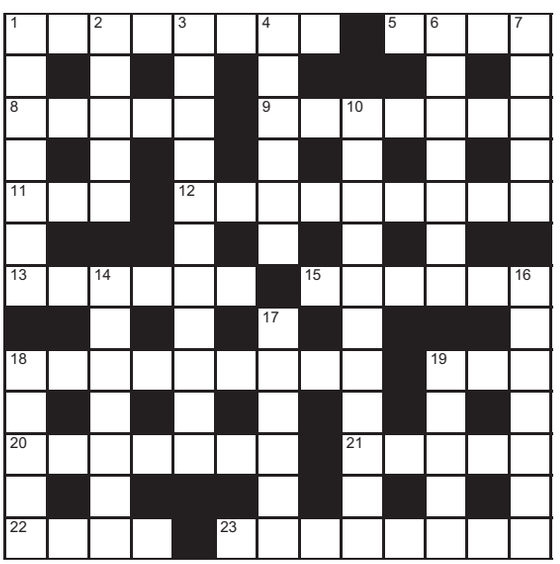
Sakuro
No 4818



Place the numbers 1 to 9 in the spaces so that the number in each circle is equal to the sum of the four surrounding spaces, and each colour total is correct

For interactive puzzles visit thetimes.com

The Times Quick Cryptic
No 3378 by Joker



Across
1 Vehicle days on station? This may be sent home (8)
5 Massage following last of fattening food (4)
8 Ship's back badly set by Royal Navy (5)
9 Standard form of Laos sunshade (7)
11 A representative unit used in grids (3)
12 Control police stress (9)
13 Versace regularly copy — avoid (6)
15 One good in open flying? (6)
18 What's glued into altered map can show this (9)
19 Catch burbot and gurnard to begin with (3)
20 Fall in support for person learning on the job (7)
21 Concerning blood type forbidden (5)
22 Sign me on working (4)
23 An insect protecting unusual nest — one not here (8)

Down
1 Father's green-coloured in sea voyage (7)
2 Drop off some letter entailing extra postage initially (5)
3 Device, something to stop pregnancy shunned by church (11)
4 Restore theatre song (6)
6 Book place to watch game (7)
7 Rubbish for instance library turned up (5)
10 Seek to preserve rare fig tree that's damaged (11)
14 Depressed on being in cold underground chamber (7)
16 Garment close to neckwear (7)
17 Excellent first two-thirds of US football championship match (6)
18 See about excessive style of bingo (5)
19 Inflate vessel outside loch (5)

Yesterday's solution on page 15

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- Play against the clock
- Compete in our leaderboard
- Play offline and online

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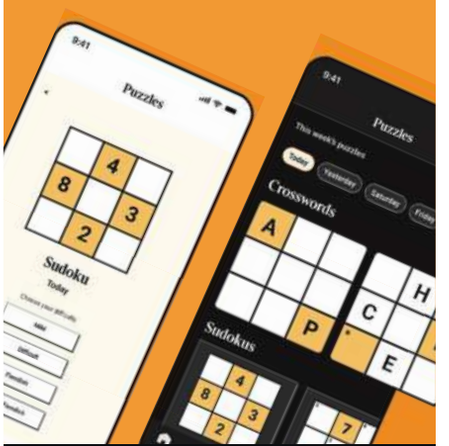

THE TIMES
THE SUNDAY TIMES